# Introduction

**“Following the Government Authorities’ Announcement late on Friday 13th March that non-essential events with more than 500 people should be cancelled from Monday 16th March – Melbourne Fashion Festival Limited, in the interests of the health and safety of partners, team, volunteers and patrons made the decision the same day to cancel all remaining produced events, effectively immediately, as a precautionary containment measure.”**

Vision Australia's partnership with the Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival would have brought Audio Description to an important social, cultural and artistic arena that has rarely been made accessible and we were so thrilled that some of you would be joining us. We are already looking forwards to making this happen at the 2021 Festival, but in the meantime thought we would try to bring you the next best option – an audio description track of how the runway would have sounded – to share with you some of the fantastic outfits that were planned for Runway 4. We got right up to the dress rehearsal before news of the cancellation was announced so have a lot of preparation to inform what follows. Please note that many of the shoes, accessories and hair and make-up choices were not necessarily in place so the focus will be on the outfits themselves. To get even greater verisimilitude, you can put on some pumping ‘bass’ music in the background to help transport yourself into the experience, and the transcript of these notes includes a link to the actual playlist that would have accompanied the runway: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3g6xSJenpnesYotFqm8akT?si=dTQLlsJtTXq2GZ_w8fs9SQ>

There are 2 parts to this – the pre-show notes then the ‘show’ itself. The recordings have been separated into the 8 designers’ collections so you can dip in and out or just play right through.

Thank you for your understanding, patience and, above all, commitment to fashion – those who purchased tickets for this event have already demonstrated that there is an appetite out there amongst our community and we look forward to seeing you all next year, virus free.

# Pre-Show Notes

These are the pre-show notes for Runway 4 of the Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival, 2020. They’ll provide descriptive and logistical information about the experience and should be read in conjunction with any other logistics you have received.

Runway 4 was scheduled to take place on Friday 13th March 2020 – what follows is an attempt to virtually transport you into the show…

The venue is the Royal Exhibition Building – a World Heritage-listed building in Melbourne built in 1879-80 as part of the international exhibition movement, which presented over 50 exhibitions between 1851 and 1915 around the globe. The building sits on 64 acres, is 150 meters long and is surrounded by four city streets. It is located at 9 Nicholson Street in the Carlton Gardens, flanked by Victoria, Carlton and Rathdowne Streets, at the north-eastern edge of the central business district. It was built to host the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1880–81, and then hosted the even larger Centennial International Exhibition in 1888, and the formal opening of the first Parliament of Australia in 1901. The building is representative of the money and pride Victoria had in the 1870s.[2] Throughout the 20th century smaller sections and wings of the building were subject to demolition and fire; however, the main building, known as the Great Hall, survived. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Exhibition_Building>)

It’s in the Great Hall that the show will take place, beneath an elaborately painted towering ceiling supported by decorated exposed roof trusses. For the show, a network of lights and cameras are suspended below the ceiling at balcony level, to project down the length of the runway.

The show will last around 40 minutes following a VIP backstage Touch Tour led by Fashion and Events Manager Ebony Hui, giving privileged access to the backstage activity and some of the designers’ collections.

Just a quick word about how we’ve chosen to approach this exciting experience:

Describing a Fashion Show is very new territory – so many thanks to those who were able to complete the pre-show survey to help us understand what you want to know – we will do our best to reflect your priorities in the description. I’ll also be seeking your feedback in the near future to understand what worked for you and how we can improve next time.

On each evening, there will be 28 models showing approximately 105 outfits during the 40 minutes of the show. [A new outfit appearing about once every 20 seconds] Rather than try and mention each outfit, I’ll pick out as many of them as possible focusing on the most striking, the most typical for the designer, and picking out any you may have experienced during the Touch Tour.

I’m going to describe as much as possible but feel free at any time to slip off your headphones if you want to just soak up the sounds and atmosphere. Fashion Shows are notoriously loud – and we anticipate this being no different – but we hope the special noise cancelling headphones will help you to enjoy the audio description.

We have decided to make the most of our privileged position as partner of the Melbourne Fashion Festival. So whilst I will of course still ‘say what I see’ – the descriptions will be informed by the background and close-up information we’ve had access to in the run-up to the festival – giving you a more in-depth understanding and description of the show than others in the audience will be able to see.

# About the Festival

Now in its 24th year, the Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival (VAMFF) is Australia’s largest and most influential celebration of fashion, arts, ideas, shopping and creative endeavour. Each year, the Festival presents the most stylish fashion focused entertainment on offer including world class runway shows featuring Australia’s established and emerging designers, state-of-the-art production, industry seminars, forums, live entertainment and much more.

Managed and produced by Melbourne Fashion Festival Limited (MFF), a not-for-profit organisation that supports and connects the Australian fashion industry, the Festival showcases and amplifies the profile of Australian designers locally and globally, whilst inspiring consumers and retailers that drive the life and growth of the Australian fashion industry.

The theme of this year’s Festival is ‘Fashion Wonderland’. According to a piece in The Age, “fashion has often been fun, long allowing people to bend rules, create a signature style, defy expectations and push boundaries.[…] Lately, it’s been serious, with key topics such as sustainability, diversity, inclusion and transparency popping up in its landscape. For a time, these two separate approaches battled for exclusivity. Now, it seems, the two can merge.”

Festival chairman David Briskin echoes this sentiment: “Diversity, inclusivity and sustainability should be normal, and you can see that this is the norm in VAMFF’s wider advertising campaign…Kate Gaskin, VAMFF stylist: “The colour palette for winter is fun – everyone’s using bright colours and block colouring. But the runways have also changed. It used to be that it was all models walking down the runway looking very unhappy, but now there’s a lot of diversity and inclusivity that makes you feel happy.”

Estelle Michaelides, Fashion by Appointment, a quartet of designers making bespoke fashion: “We’re looking at individual consumers and saying, ‘Let’s celebrate you. Let’s make it fun and whimsical and let’s purchase with a conscience'.”

[The festival’s Special Guest – the ‘zeitgeist of the event’ is Celeste Barber who said] t’s exactly the message that Barber aims to disseminate. “I live by the lyrics, ‘A little less conversation, a little more action…instead of talking about how much we should be putting different shapes, sizes and ethnicities out there, let’s do it. Let’s stop making it a really exciting thing to have someone that looks different on a runway and just do it.”

[Face of the festival is] indigenous Australian model Charlee Fraser ….chosen because she embodies the spirit of joy and individuality in this year’s theme.

<https://www.theage.com.au/lifestyle/fashion/where-insiders-will-find-fun-at-vamff-20200225-p5445k.html>

# About the Designers

**Runway 4 is** presented by Elle Magazine with a “dynamic display of [8] leading designers whose collections exude extraordinary confidence and style. With a focus on innovation and wearability, the runway will come alive with fashion that steers slightly away from the norm to result in singular garments and entire ensembles that introduce a departure from the expected resulting in new season trends. Bringing together some of the Festival’s favourite fashion designers, Runway 4 promises to inspire and excite with highly anticipated brands cementing their place at the pinnacle of Australian fashion.”

# Runway 4 Designers:

Alice McCall is the eponymous label of fashion designer, Alice McCall. Established in 2004, the brand’s design aesthetic is driven by the overriding tastes and interests of Alice herself. The resulting product is playful, quirky and fun with a kick of sexiness. McCall’s love of vintage clothing is something that can be seen throughout each collection with injections of flared silhouettes, belled sleeves and pastel tones.

Season after season, alice McCALL designs remain uniquely feminine. Each collection plays with the graphic use of space and colour and experiment with fabric techniques from delicate hand embroidery to developing custom in house laces.

At this catwalk we’ll see Broderie anglais (a feature that incorporates embroidery around fine cutwork creating a delicate patterned mesh), chiffon, lace and ruffles mix with romantic patterns and shades of indigo and pastels.

Bul [Pron ‘Buhl’] was founded in 2010 by Virginia Martin (who named her company after the nickname her brother gave her). Another Australian label, travel and exploration is pivotal to the label. Each collection is named after a personal travel experience of the designer: Native flora, local architecture, and the natural surrounds generate tonal palettes, thoughtful fabrications and textural silhouettes. At Runway 4 there’s a focus on sheers, blues and lilacs with boxy and tailored pieces and an emphasis on outerwear.

BY JOHNNY**.** is the contemporary Australian womenswear label of designer Johnny Schembri Begun in 2009 and inspired by design concepts from past and present, BY JOHNNY. reworks traditional silhouettes to create collections for the individual who appreciates effortless style with a unique and modern edge.

Each season, BY JOHNNY. evolves and blends bold aesthetics and delicate body contouring, ensuring a vital intensity; bold and brave.

For Runway 4 they will bring bright shades of red, fuchsia and bubblegum punk with puff sleeves and exaggerated bows at the waist and neck.

Hansen & Gretel is the label of designer/creative director Ainsley Hansen. Established in 2008, Hansen & Gretel opened doors to their successful Sydney flagship in 2014. The label presents a fusion of masculine shapes with a femme sensibility – subtle, refined, and applicable to the everyday.

On this runway they’ll bring pinks – this time pastel – with neutral shades and contrasting tailored and flowing pieces.

Kate Sylvesteris a New Zealand designer whose conceptual collections embody intelligence, witty irreverence, sophistication and modern femininity.

Ever the subtle subversive, Kate Sylvester plays off disparate references, seamlessly stitching sportswear with couture, menswear with womenswear, pop culture with history, high art with punk rock. Her resulting collections are at once eccentric, beautiful and intelligent. Each collection challenges nostalgic sensibilities with modern use of colour, cut and exclusive in-house prints.

For Runway 4 the collection will focus on loose masculine tailoring and drapey dresses, using plain but textured fabrics with pops of pastel.

LEO & LIN is the label of one of Australia’s latest rising stars in the fashion industry, Leo Lin. Quickly carving a name for himself after debuting a breath-taking Resort 19 collection at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Australia in 2018.

LEO & LIN has a captivating and unique design perfectly balancing structured, clean silhouettes with beautiful custom prints and trims, bringing together the core of the LEO & LIN woman in every piece – Strength, Elegance and Romance. Becoming a favourite amongst celebrities, LEO & LIN has been spotted on Olivia Palermo, Ashley Graham, Dakota Fanning, and a host of local and international stylists and influencers.

At this catwalk they make frequent use of a transparent PVC check-material layered over satin fabrics, as well as a bold black on white pattern.

TORANNCE is an Australian elevated contemporary label dedicated to timelessness, luxury and wear-ability. Paying homage to vintage trends and muses, TORANNCE plays on eccentricities and eye catching details, while still being completely wearable and something that can take you from day to night.

With a strong emphasis on quality, all TORANNCE garments are designed using premium materials, including natural fabrications, ethically sourced leathers, and beautiful hand embellished materials. Avoiding fleeting trends and focusing on timeless fashion, TORANNCE aims to provide their customers with a unique and masterfully crafted collection.

At Runway 4 they use a palette of black and tan, with visible buttons, echoes of the mackintosh and shiny fabrics.

We Are Kindred is the label of two sisters with a single vision. Established in 2013 by siblings, best friends, and kindreds, Lizzie and Georgie Renkert, the Australian label is a celebration of sexy feminism.

Drawing from over 30 years of collective experience in the fashion industry across magazine editing, design, buying and development, the sisters’ deep respect for one another’s individual aesthetic informs an offering of effortless modern luxury – with a touch of bohemia.

In a celebration of harmony and symbiosis, We Are Kindred is feminine, yet modern and their innovative designs are realised through rich fabrications, embellishments and bespoke prints.

They’ll bring to Runway 4 lots of Broderie Anglais and romantic floral patterns as well as one-tone outfits in black and neutral. Like many of the other outfits presented layers and ruffles are a key detail.

## About the Models

An enormous thank you to the ‘Describing Diversity’ project team whose preview of their pre-analysis findings has informed our approach to describing this evening’s models appropriately (<https://vocaleyes.co.uk/describing-diversity-survey/>)

The 28 models in this show are a diverse mix of models of different nationalities, skintones ranging from very pale right through the spectrum to dark brown, and ranging from 5.7 to 5.9 in height and a mix of slender, curvy and strong, muscled sporty bodies.

The models are made up by Hair & Makeup Director Sarah Laidlaw - some with a natural glow and some with a feature eye makeup, their hair loose and softly styled, bouncing around their shoulders as they walk or pinned back. One model will be wearing a hijab to cover her hair.

As they make their way down the runway their direction is to “deploy an attitude of the ELLE Girl: Fun with a bit of cool edge”.

The timings are carefully calibrated to ensure each model has enough time to change into their next outfit, with the help of backstage dressers. A choreographer watches a live feed of the runway to cue in each model’s entrance onto the catwalk.

For those of you tempted by anything that comes down the runway this evening most of the garments are available from about 2 hours or so after the end of the show through the Shop The Runway platform (which can be accessed through the VAMFF website – [www.vamff.com.au](http://www.vamff.com.au) )

## About the Runway

The runway is painted black, and is the typical long, narrow format, stretching out 46 metres. It is at floor level, with raked seating of 7 rows on either side, with most of the audience looking down on the runway. Your seats are at the prime spot at the very peak of the runway. Above you is a beam from which more lighting is suspended, directed at the runway.

The pillars which hold up the vaulted ceiling are mostly hidden by temporary black walls which have been set up around the audience seating area. There are 4 large screens on these walls, which will show strategic angles of the runway, the names of designers and promotional films.

Wings have been constructed at the far end of the runway, beneath the building’s impressive semi-circular fanlight. The wings are hidden by LED screens which frame the opening of the runway, and onto which various images will be projected.

The show will kick off with a 2 minute promotional film before the models start filing onto the runway. The choreography is such that a model appears around every 10 seconds from the wings at the back of the runway to your right. They make their way down the centre of the runway, taking approximately 30 seconds to traverse its length. – when they reach the end – which is only a few metres ahead of where you are facing – they turn without pause and walk back. The models alternate between walking back down the left side and the right side, exiting through the respective wings. The overall effect is of a constant ebb and flow of movement up and down the runway. At the end of each designer’s collection, it is not until the final model has exited the runway that the next wave of models appear – each time using the same choreography - showcasing the next designer’s collection. Whilst each designer’s clothes are showing, their name appears on the 4 screens suspended on the walls behind the audience ahead of you. The LED screens which hide the wings pulse through different colours – adding to the sense of constantly flowing motion.

Bright white catwalk lighting will highlight the centre of the runway

Right up until the last minute decisions are being made about which outfits will make it onto the runway and which model can best showcase them. We look forward to describing as much as we can for you on the night.

Now, please sit back and enjoy the show!

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