

DANCE AUSTRALIA

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE THEATRE

How to deal with it

MATTHEW LAWRENCE

on bringing boys to ballet

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The opinions expressed in *Dance Australia* are not necessarily those of the publisher or editorial staff.

Dancer: Rhiana Katz



PHOTO: ALICE LEE HOLLAND

Freedom in form

LATE summer in my home town sees Perth Festival and Fringe World festival transform Perth's cultural centre, Northbridge, into a hive of live shows. The current Perth Festival director, Wendy Martin, is a passionate advocate for dance. It's reflected in her programming, with six superb dance productions this season. That's in spite of the fact that contemporary dance tends to attract a small sector of the arts-attending audience, in comparison to genres such as theatre and circus.

This summer, however, there were two movement-based works that appeared to appeal as much to those new to dance as to those who watch it regularly. The first was Michelle Aitken's Fringe World show *Future's Eve*, a full-length solo work of physical theatre that scathingly interrogates ideas about the female body. Clever, comedic and confronting, it was no surprise to learn that *Future's Eve* won the Melbourne Tour Ready Fringe World Award.

The second was *Attractor*, the award-winning collaboration between Dance North, Lucy Guerin Inc., Indonesian music duo Senyawa, Gideon Obarzanek and Lucy Guerin. Presented at Perth Festival, its wild blend of music and dance, and blurring of boundaries between audience and performers, was exhilarating to witness.

What is it that enables a contemporary dance work to reach out beyond its traditional audience? I think the answer lies, in part, in my interview with Alice Lee Holland for part three of our contemporary technique series (p. 56). Holland's advice is holistic, taking in the mind as well as the body. When she talks about "letting go", it's not just about releasing muscle tension, but about letting go mentally. "We're concerned with all the things we associate with dance, like power, control and appearance... and actually dance is an embodiment of freedom," she observes.

Thinking back to the performances I saw of *Future's Eve* and *Attractor*, Holland's ideas resonate. In both, the performers' total commitment to what Holland describes as "infinite possibility" made for compelling viewing. And it's this ability to "find freedom in form" that, I believe, speaks equally to those more and less familiar with the language of dance.

“Dance is an embodiment of freedom.”

– Alice Lee Holland, "Let it go", page 56



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NINA LEVY – CO-EDITOR

Dance North receives Sidney Myer Award

THE artistic director of Dance North is “truly ecstatic” to be named recipient of the 2017 Sidney Myer Performing Arts Group Award. “Dancenorth is the coming together of incredible minds generously collaborating to create contemporary dance that challenges convention and inspires a reimagining of the world,” Kyle Page says. “The extraordinary generosity of the Sidney Myer Fund and the Trustees enables us to continue pushing the boundaries, creating bold new work in Townsville before touring around Australia and across the globe.”

The prestigious awards were announced by Carrillo Gantner AO, Chair of the Sidney Myer Fund, at the Brisbane Powerhouse as part of the Australian Performing Arts Market on February 21. Three of Australia’s leading arts practitioners have been announced as the winners – playwright and actor Kate Mulvany has won the Individual Award (\$60,000), Nicole Beyer, Executive Director, Theatre

Network Australia, has won the Facilitator’s Prize (\$25,000) and Dance North has won the Group Award (\$90,000).

Now in its 34th year, the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Awards are one of the richest and most coveted awards in the performing arts in Australia.

For each recipient this award is an acknowledgement of their rich artistic achievements.

The Trustees of the Sidney Myer Foundation believe that real achievement should be recognised and rewarded. To date they have awarded well over \$3.5 million.

Announced annually, the national awards are determined by a judging committee chaired by Gantner and this year comprised Brian Ritchie (Curator, MOFO, Tas); Christie Anthony (Director, Festivals South Australia); David Berthold (Artistic Director, Brisbane Festival); and Terri-anne White (CEO, UWA Publishing, WA).

The Judging Committee recognises past achievements but also gives consideration to the potential of an individual or group to continue their contribution to Australian society through the performing arts.



Kyle Page and associate artistic director, Amber Haines, of Dance North in ‘Synching Feeling’.

PHOTO: ASHLEY MCGILLAN

The world's largest dance gig

BIG Dance is an event that sees thousands of people dance together in some of the world's most iconic locations. It will be hitting Australia on International Dance Day, April 29.

Encouraging people to be active through dance, Big Dance is a free, large-scale participatory celebration open to everyone of all ages, abilities and experience.

In the months leading up to Big Dance, Ausdance Victoria and NSW will motivate aspiring dancers and community groups to learn the Big Dance 2018 routine in a series of fun, free dance workshops. The Big Dance 2018 routine includes versions to suit a variety of capabilities and circumstances, including standing and seated. Online tutorials will be available, in which the Big Dance 2018 routines are guided and taught by developing dance college artists from National Aboriginal Islander



PHOTO: JAMIE JAMES

Skills Development Association (NAISDA) and the dance cues will also be provided in an easy-to-follow learning guide.

The routine has been created by acclaimed Indigenous choreographer Frances Rings and New Zealand-born Craig Bary and has an original score by Huey Benjamin. The Big Dance 2018 choreography is a five-minute contemporary Indigenous routine that anyone can learn.

To find out more about how you can be part of this event, head to www.bigdance.org.au.

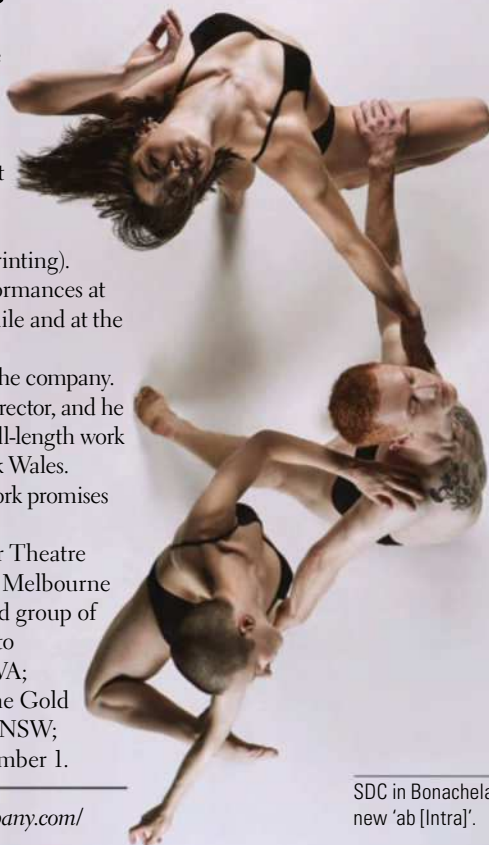
A landmark year for SDC

AS this issue hits the newsstand, Sydney Dance Company will be in the middle of a European tour. The company will perform for the first time in Paris, at the Theatre National de Chaillot, from April 11 to 13, followed by gigs at the Belgrade Dance Festival in Serbia; at the Cankarjev Dom in Ljubljana, Slovenia; and in Germany (venue unconfirmed at the time of printing). The European tour comes on the heels of performances at the Festival Internacional Santiago a Mil in Chile and at the Teatro Mayor in Bogota, both in January.

The tours are the start of a landmark year for the company. 2018 is Rafael Bonachela's 10th year as artistic director, and he is marking the occasion with the creation of a full-length work – *[ab] Intra*, in collaboration with composer Nick Wales. Meaning "From Within", from the Latin, the work promises to "explore the depths of human impulse".

ab [Intra] will premiere at the Roslyn Packer Theatre from May 14 to 26, then move to Arts Centre Melbourne from May 30 to June 2. After that this splendid group of dancers will take the work on a national tour: to Darwin, NT; Bunbury, Mandura and Perth, WA; Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Gladstone and the Gold Coast, Qld; Bathurst, Orange and Newcastle, NSW; and finally Canberra from August 30 to September 1.

For more info go to <https://www.sydneydancecompany.com/>



SDC in Bonachela's new 'ab [Intra]'.

PHOTO: PEDRO GREGG

WEB HIGHLIGHTS

1



BOYS ONLY BALLET WORKSHOPS

Ballet Brothers, an independent organization aimed at supporting and encouraging boys who love to dance, is holding workshops in April. There will be male specific classes, coaching and more. <http://www.danceaustralia.com.au/yafevent/ballet-brothers-workshops>

2



NEW SHAPE FOR BODYTORQUE

The Australian Ballet is presenting its choreographic season in Melbourne this year, with the title of Bodytorque: Atelier. Read more at <http://www.danceaustralia.com.au/news/bodytorque-takes-a-newshape>.

3



MURIEL WILL BE BACK

So successful has been the premiere season of 'Muriel's Wedding The Musical' in Sydney that the producers have already announced it will return in July, 2019. The first season was sold out. <http://www.danceaustralia.com.au/news/muriel-s-wedding-returns-in-2019>



Performing Under Pressure

Dancers regularly experience the pressure to perform well. This pressure usually manifests as anxiety or stress – which are essentially a combination of psychological and physiological responses in your brain and body. When your brain anticipates a threat, regardless of whether it is real OR imagined (!), it sends messages to your body to prepare to respond (e.g., fight, flight or freeze). Harnessing your nervous energy AND being able to manage your thoughts about what is ‘stressing you out’ will help you perform at your peak regardless of the situation.

- Focus on controlling your breathing – take deep and slow breaths.
- Reflect upon the self-talk or ‘worrying’ thoughts that might be racing through your mind – are they really accurate or are you potentially imagining the worst?
- Focus on your strengths and the many examples of when you have performed well.
- Encourage your brain to focus on being fully present in the moment – not worrying about what could go wrong.
- Bring to mind WHY you chose to dance in the first place – usually it is because you loved it and enjoyed it.

Professor Gene Moyle, Performance Psychologist, Head of School – School of Creative Industries, QUT.

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Martins accused of misconduct

FOR over 30 years, the New York City Ballet has been under the artistic direction of Peter Martins, the only leader the company has had aside from its legendary founder, the great choreographer George Balanchine. Now 71, Martins had never given any indication that retirement was in his sights. But in the course of a whirlwind and shocking four weeks, NYCB’s steady, stable leadership profile unraveled.

The flurry of news – which was covered intensely and prominently in the New York Times – began on December 4 last year with a report that the company, along with its affiliated School of American Ballet, had initiated an investigation in response to an anonymous letter accusing Martins of sexual harassment.

Although no official announcement was made, on December 7 “the company confirmed” that Martins had requested – and NYCB’s board of directors had granted – a temporary leave of absence.

In a December 9 press release, NYCB announced that “an interim team has been appointed to oversee the artistic management” during Martins’s absence. Taking charge of “the day-to-day artistic life of the company” are Jonathan Stafford, a current ballet master and former principal dancer with NYCB; NYCB resident choreographer and soloist Justin Peck; and ballet masters Craig Hall and Rebecca Krohn, both of whom retired in recent years after substantial performing careers with the troupe.

All of this transpired as NYCB was in the midst of its extended annual run of 47 performances of George Balanchine’s *The Nutcracker*, which continued from November 24 to December 31.

The day after that season closed, on January 1, Martins sent a letter to the NYCB board informing them of his decision to retire, effective immediately. During December, reports of physically and verbally abusive past behaviour had appeared in several articles, in both *The Times* and the *Washington Post*.

“I have denied, and continue to deny, that I have engaged in any such misconduct,” Martins stated in his letter. He wrote that he had cooperated fully in the ongoing investigation, and that “I believe its findings would have vindicated me”.

Martins had been in charge of the artistic side of NYCB since Balanchine’s death in 1983. Initially he and the company’s other celebrated choreographer, Jerome Robbins, shared the leadership, but Martins had sole responsibility since 1989.

Martins had been a leading principal dancer with the Royal Danish Ballet before joining NYCB in 1970, soon becoming one of its most prominent and acclaimed principals. He began choreographing for the company in 1977 and contributed numerous ballets to its repertoire since then. Martins was also the School of American Ballet’s artistic director and faculty chairman.

His departure leaves a huge and sudden void. Speculation has inevitably begun about who might become NYCB’s next leader. A number of former company members have gone on to direct important companies in other American cities and might appear to be potential candidates. Some are choreographers, some are not. There are three choreographers – Christopher Wheeldon, Alexei Ratmansky and Justin Peck – whose work Martins commissioned regularly for NYCB, and whose careers he nurtured. Their names might be in the mix. It is generally assumed that a familiarity with, and commitment to, the Balanchine repertoire is a *sine qua non* for anyone who would take over.

But for the moment there is no time frame, or clear expectation, for when such a crucial appointment might be made, and how the position would be defined. The repertoire and programming for the year had been planned many months ago.

– SUSAN REITER
(NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT)



The interim team at NYCB (from left): Justin Peck, Rebecca Krohn, Jonathan Stafford, and Craig Hall.

PHOTO: PAUL KOLNIK

Dance in a wider context

Styles taught: Vestris/ Bournonville, Volkova/Vaganova, RAD, Cecchetti, Graham, Spanish Dance Society
Graduates dancing professionally in Australia, Europe, North America, South Africa, Asia



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Genée Gold 2009
Royal New Zealand Ballet 2010

JESSI SEYMOUR
FINALIST PRIX DE LAUSANNE
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WINNER CECCHETTI GOLD
MEDAL AWARD NSW 2017
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LUCIE SARANOVA NATIONAL
COMPETITION, GOLD
SECTION 2017
OUTRIGHT WINNER SYDNEY
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BALLET SCHOLARSHIP 2017
ACCEPTED INTO ROYAL BALLET
SCHOOL, UK SEPTEMBER 2017



HARRY CHURCHES
ROYAL BALLET
COMPANY, UK



BRAYDEN GALLUCCI
WINNER ISOBEL ANDERSON
AWARD ADVANCED 1 2016
RUNNER-UP CECCHETTI
NSW SENIOR MEDAL 2016,
FINALIST PRIX DE
LAUSANNE 2016,
ROYAL BALLET SCHOOL
JANUARY 2017



STEVEN McRAE
GENÉE GOLD 2002
PRIX DE LAUSANNE
WINNER 2003, PRINCIPAL
ARTIST ROYAL BALLET
COVENT GARDEN,
WINNER YOUNG
AUSTRALIAN
ACHIEVER OF THE YEAR
UK 2014



AURELIAN CHILD
DE BROCAS
GENÉE GOLD 2012
LUCIE SARANOVA
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M & T Motion make magic

IN May this year Melbourne audiences will have the chance to see a unique pairing of talents: Australian choreographer Tim Podesta and principal guest artist of the Royal Ballet, Mara Galeazzi.

The pair formed a collaboration in 2015, called M & T in Motion, and since then have been building an international reputation. Podesta's *Shadow Aspect* was nominated for five awards and won Best New Ballet Production at the Wales Theatre Awards. That work, which included dancers of Ballet Cymru, premiered in late 2017 in Newport, Wales, followed by a sell-out London performance at the Sadler's Wells Linbury Theatre.

This year the pair will be joined in Australia by Company Wayne McGregor dancers James Pett and Travis Knight, Chilean principal dancer from the National Ballet of Mexico, Sebastian Vinet, and German principal dancer, Marlon Dino. Together they will

present *FORTÉ*, a program of new contemporary works, including one by Podesta and a joint work by Pett and Knight.

FORTÉ will premiere in Melbourne at the Deakin Edge at Federation Square on May 25, and will also have a regional showing in Podesta's hometown of Albury-Wodonga. Further UK performances are planned for 2019.

Before then, Dino and Galeazzi will feature in a new dance film by Podesta, *La Jeune Femme e la Mort*, which was filmed in Australia in March. The work is a reimagining of the Roland Petit's *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort*, which was later also created in film versions for Nureyev and Baryshnikov.

M & T In Motion will be offering student workshops in Melbourne and Albury-Wodonga in conjunction with the performances and a dance research conference in Albury-Wodonga.

For more information go to <http://www.projectiondance.com>.

Mara Galeazzi

PHOTO: SIÂN TRENBERTH

VET cuts start to hurt

CHANGES to the vocational education and training (VET) fee loan scheme announced by the Turnbull Government in 2016 are starting to have an impact on the dance world.

In total, more than 470 VET courses are now deemed ineligible for VET Student Loans by the government across a range of areas including commerce, marketing,

architecture, education, health and creative industries. This means students enrolling in these courses no longer have the option of taking a government-funded loan or, from January 1 this year, accessing Centrelink support to assist with fee payment.

In the creative arts, more than 50 courses have been excluded, including many diploma,

advanced diploma and graduate diploma dance-related courses. Among the courses originally deemed ineligible for loans are Diploma of Dance (Elite Performance); Diploma of Musical Theatre; Advanced Diploma of Dance (Elite Performance); Advanced Diploma of Art (Musical Theatre and Commercial Dance); Advanced Diploma of Ballet; Graduate Diploma of Classical Ballet; Diploma of Performing Arts and Advanced Diploma of Performing Arts. Since the original announcement, the Diploma of Dance (Elite Performance) and the Advanced Diploma of Dance (Elite Performance) have been reinstated to the scheme.

While the loan cuts do not affect degree programs, they will limit the accessibility of VET courses for prospective students who may not be able to afford to pay fees up front. As predicted in Feb/Mar 2017 issue of *Dance Australia*, this has already led to some students not being able to take up their offers or enrol in their course of choice, as study in these affected courses has become economically unviable.

— MICHELLE DURSUN

Workshopping at ImpulsTanz.



PHOTO: KAROLINA WIERNICK

Want to dance in Vienna?

IMPULSTANZ, the international dance festival based in Vienna in Austria, is calling for registrations for its annual program.

Established in 1984 by Karl Regensburger and Ismael Ivo, and “utterly dedicated” to the promotion of contemporary dance,

ImpulsTanz is now one of the biggest and most comprehensive dance festivals in Europe, taking over the city’s theatres and nightlife for four weeks.

The festival has four main pillars: Performance, Workshop, Research and Social.

With about 50 productions in Vienna’s most important venues, more than 200 workshops and many social events, the festival also draws in some of Europe’s most innovative choreographers and thinkers.

Registrations have now opened to apply for the ATLAS program, which allows emerging young dance artists to work intensively on their professional development. The program provides studio space for research and creation, top-class training possibilities with a dedicated coach, tickets to a broad range of international dance productions and the opportunity to mix and exchange views and ideas with fellow artists from more than 100 countries. Weekly showings are also included.

Successful applicants take part in workshops, receive 20 tickets for ImpulsTanz performances, accommodation, discount food and travel vouchers (within Vienna).

The registration fee is €3,250 and the deadline is May 31, 2018.

The entire festival runs from July 12 to August 12. The names of the teachers and performances will be announced at the end of April.

Go to <https://www.impulstanz.com/en/atlas/2018/>.

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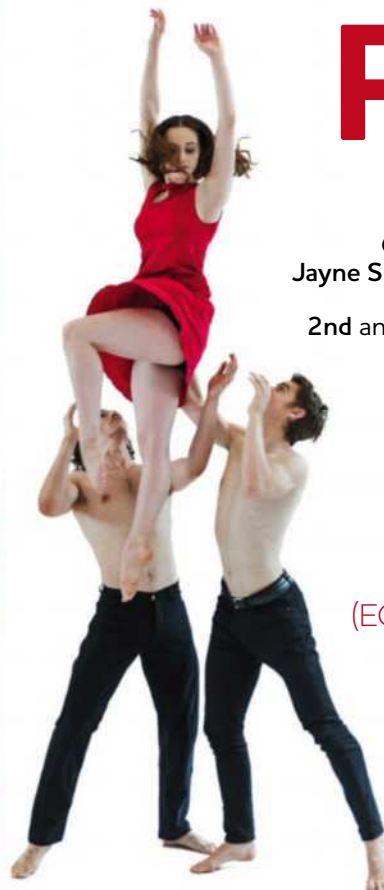
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THE Cuban dance phenomenon, Ballet Revolución, is returning to Australia for a national tour in April/May with a brand new production.

Cuba is renowned for its sensational dancers (Carlos Acosta a case in point). This troupe of dancers has already thrilled audiences in sold-out shows from Singapore to Berlin, Vienna and London. Australian choreographer Aaron Cash (a former tap dog with an extensive CV as actor and dancer), along with Cuban choreographer Roclan Gonzalez Chavez, blend breathtaking ballet, contemporary dance, salsa and Cuban dance to produce a unique fusion with a distinctly Cuban flavour.

The tour begins at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre on Friday April 27, and continues through Bunbury, Perth, Canberra, Sydney, Frankston, Melbourne and Adelaide.

Go <http://www.balletrevolucion.com.au> for full details.

A scene from the new Ballet Revolución.

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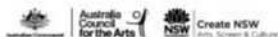
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ab [intra]

SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY



Ticket giveaway to 'Swan Lake On Ice'!

If you enjoyed the recent Winter Olympics ice skating, then this is the show for you! The Imperial Ice Stars is returning to Australia with this award-winning production, touring to Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney in July. Showcasing 23 former Olympic, World, European and National Championship-level skaters, the entire cast holds more than 250 medals between them. Together they bring their athletic and artistic talents to Tchaikovsky's ballet classic.

The show is choreographed by Tony Mercer, produced by James Cundall *Dance Australia*, in association with the producers, can offer one DOUBLE PASS for each venue below:

- Arts Centre Melb: July 3,
- Adelaide: July 18, Entertainment Centre
- Sydney: July 25, Capitol Theatre

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Pinera and Ramos: 'Cuban dancers love to dance', they say.

A PERFECT MATCH



Q

Denise Richardson talks to the Queensland Ballet's stunning principal dancers, Yanela Piñera and Camilo Ramos, about their emotional journey from Cuba.

QUEENSLAND Ballet (QB) principal artists Yanela Piñera and Camilo Ramos first came to Brisbane in 2010, as members of the National Ballet of Cuba, performing in its sensational production of *Don Quixote*. They knew a little about Australia, but nothing of Brisbane. Finding themselves now firmly established in the city, seven years later, is still a source of wonderment to them both.

"We had a great time here," enthuses Piñera. "We went to the zoo, walked around the city, saw the Valentino exhibition. One of the things that impressed us most was the (Southbank) artificial beach in the middle of the city. Brisbane was one of the best places we had been to with the company. And then seven years later we are living here! So funny!"

I caught up with both dancers (who are partners off-stage) for coffee, across the road from QB's West End headquarters before morning class, and asked them first about the catalyst for this huge relocation to the other side of the world – artistic director Li Cunxin's invitation in 2014 to join the company. Li had been visiting the National Ballet of Cuba in Havana and was so impressed he offered them both contracts – Piñera as principal artist and Ramos as soloist. Although they had a month to consider the offer, they didn't hesitate.

"It was time for a change," insists Piñera, "this career is so short. When you work with different people you learn a lot. Even when doing different versions of the classics, like *Swan Lake*, *Coppélia* or *The Sleeping Beauty*."

"We had been wanting to try something new," adds Ramos, "although not necessarily to leave the company or the country." However, it was too good an opportunity to miss, with a chance to embrace a completely different style and new repertoire. Although they arrived at QB able to turn, to jump and do tricks – after all, as Ramos reminds me, "the ballet school (in Cuba) is one of the best in the world – here the style is more refined."



ALL PHOTOS BY DAVID KELLY

Both dancers are products of the prestigious National Ballet School of Cuba, founded in 1962 as part of the National School of Art – state funded and therefore free. Ramos began his training aged around 10, at the Elementary School of Ballet Alejo Carpentier.

“My main reason for starting was because if you go to a local dance school you get to leave (your regular) school one or two hours early. At that time my brother did ballet as a hobby. I asked him, what do you do at ballet? ‘Oh you know, have fun – dance, run, play!’ I wanted the same!”

Piñera started ballet at an earlier age at the Centro de Promoción de la Danza (Pro Danza) in Havana, before auditioning for the National Ballet School. “I had already done a little bit of television for kids and things like that,” she remembers. At 17 Piñera was accepted into the national company, and stayed there for 11 years.

Needless to say, Ramos’s brother grew tired of dance, while Ramos himself continued with further study at the National School. He also joined the National Ballet of Cuba at 17, a couple of years after Piñera – he’s two years younger – and was promoted to the rank of principal artist in 2011. That same year Piñera

was promoted from principal to premier dancer and together they travelled extensively around the world with the company.

Piñera has also been the recipient of many awards, including the Silver Medal in the International Competition of Ballet in Varna, Bulgaria, and the Gold Medal (2000 and 2004), the Bronze Medal (2002), and the prize for Best Individual Performance, all at the International Encounter of Academies for the Teaching of Ballet in Havana. In 2011 she performed at the gala Viva Alicia at the Bolshoi in Moscow, and danced the Le Corsair pas de deux at the International Ballet Gala in Dortmund, Germany in 2014.

Since arriving at QB, Piñera has danced all the principal roles in the classical repertoire – Aurora, Sugar Plum Fairy, Cinderella, Odette/Odile, while Ramos is often cast in the virtuosic demi-character roles like Peter Pan and Puck. At the time of writing both dancers were looking forward to QB’s production of *La Bayadere*, choreographed by Greg Horsman, which opened on March 16. With completely new costume and set designs, it promised many challenges they were eager to meet.

Did they think therefore, that their practice had changed in the three years since joining

THIS PAGE:
Ramos as the
Bluebird
in the QB’s ‘The
Sleeping Beauty’

OPPOSITE: Cubans
just love to dance,
say both dancers.

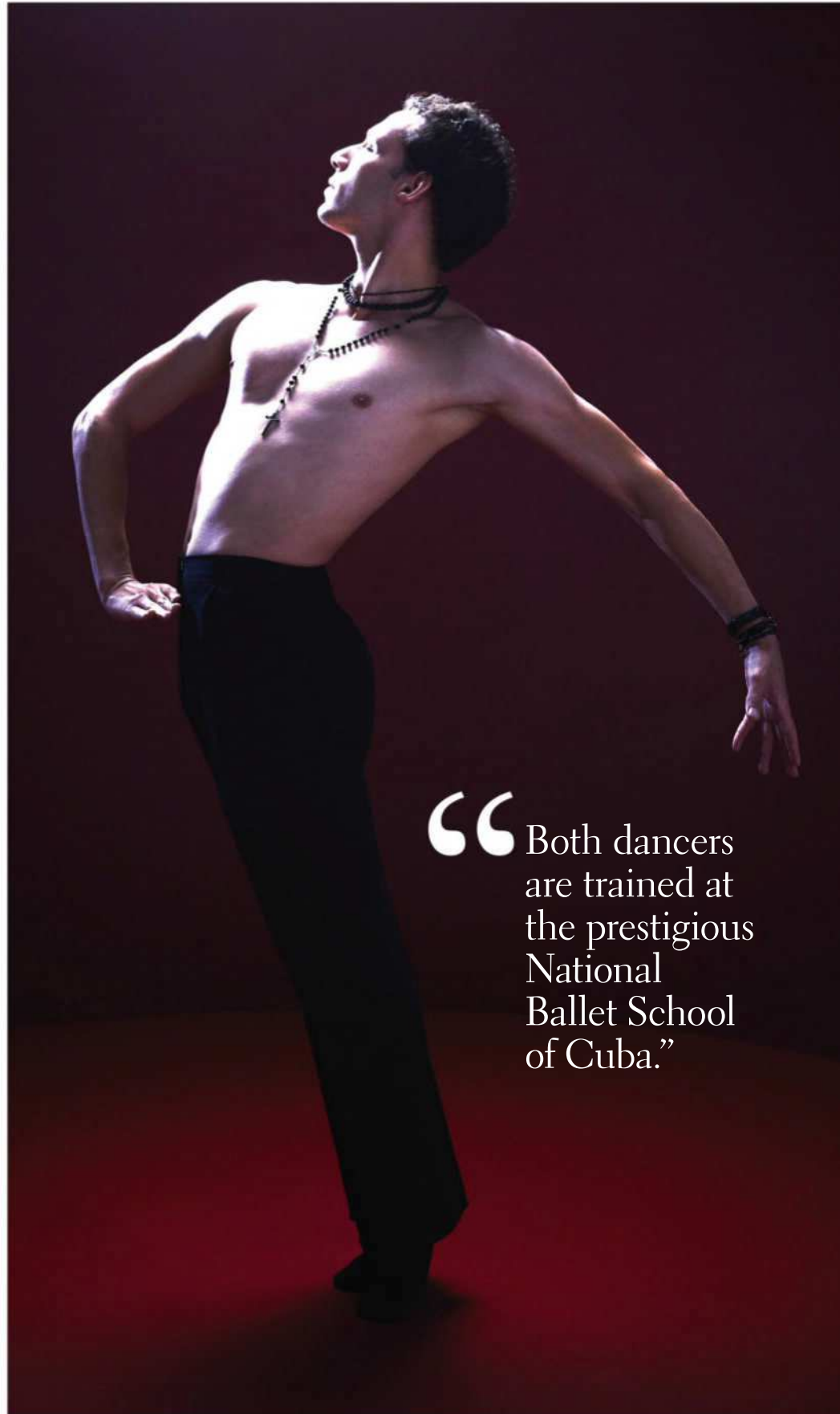


Queensland Ballet? Ramos replied with little hesitation that he had become a more refined dancer. “I am more precise than when I arrived; because (ballet master) Greg (Horsman) wants perfection. It doesn’t matter how many turns you do or how high you jump if they’re not performed perfectly with the music, or in perfect synchronisation with the rest of the movement. There is a huge difference. So I’m working on that.”

“Yes, but Cuban dancers love to dance – it is part of our culture,” interjects Piñera, “and so we also express that on the stage. So for me the acting and the artistry are important now. The audience sees that – they don’t always know about the steps. For me, the joy of every role is to work in that way. The steps are already there because we have been working for many years to perfect them, but now is the time for me to enjoy the performance, and to show artistry and the drama of a role.”

“And (ballet mistress) Mary (Li) and Li insist on the use of eyes,” adds Ramos, agreeing with Piñera who exclaims, “Ah yes! You can express love, hate, everything, with the eyes!”

Both dancers recently performed as guest artists with the Texas Ballet Theatre in its Christmas season of *The Nutcracker*.



“Both dancers are trained at the prestigious National Ballet School of Cuba.”



ALL PHOTOS BY DAVID KELLY



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Pinera in the title role in 'La Sylphide' (left) and a promotional photo for the company.

Performing together in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.

The couple will perform together in 'Carmen'.

Although partners off stage, it was one of the few times they have partnered each other on stage. A month long holiday with their families in Cuba followed before returning to Australia, highlighting for both of them the difficulties in travelling the 14,500 kilometres between the two countries.

"It's not just about the country of Cuba," says Ramos, "it's about the country you have to go through to get there. We go through Canada because it's easier to get a transit visa from Canada than from America. Every connection with Australia is difficult. It is a huge and difficult application for Cubans. You have to be invited and show you have enough funds to support yourself."

This makes the surprise visit of Piñera's mother, Maria, and younger sister Lulu for her final performance in the dual *Odette/Odile* role in *Swan Lake* last year all the more remarkable. Made possible in the space

of a week by the tenacity and drive of Amanda Talbot, who sits on the QB board, and Li, this was an emotional on-stage reunion. It was, as Piñera puts it, in what must be somewhat of an understatement "... one of the best things ever!"

"For Latin people, in Cuba, all the families are very close. We live with our parents still, and share everything with them. It's part of the culture. I have two sisters, one younger and one older, and we are all very close. Yes, we miss them."

Ramos' family hasn't visited and is unlikely to do so, but they both send photos and video images of their performances whenever possible. It makes living in Australia, a country they say they have fallen in love with, all the more bittersweet.

2017 was also a memorable year for Ramos, when, at the final curtain on the opening night of *Peter Pan*, in another on-stage emotional moment, Li announced his promotion to principal artist, along with Lucy Green. The shock, gratitude, and humility of both dancers on receiving the news was palpable, and Piñera's delight at her partner's promotion clearly evident.

So now, with the promise of another exciting year ahead for both of them, what are their plans for the future?

"For now we are staying," says Piñera. "Australia is so far away from Cuba, and we miss our families, but we love it here."

"Yes we have fallen in love with the country," adds Ramos. "The company is amazing, we feel at home there, but also the country offers so many possibilities. And Australians are so friendly – we are always saying that they are so lucky to have such a big and beautiful country. The weather here in Brisbane, too, is just like Cuba's. So it's perfect!"

FOOTNOTES



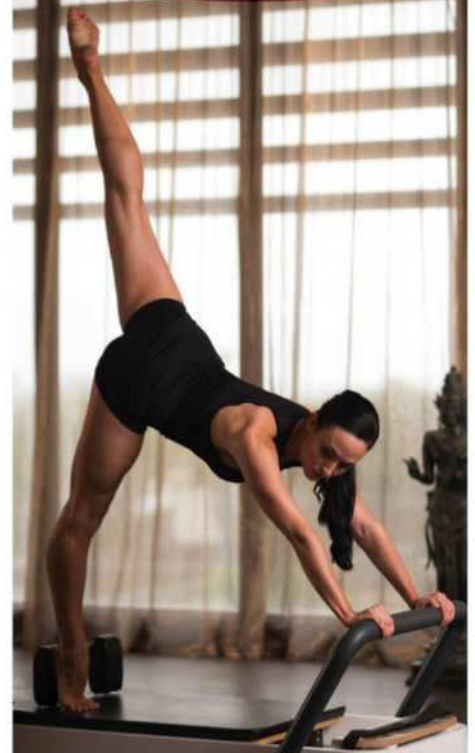
Pinera and Ramos can next be seen in the QB's Australian premiere of Carlos Acosta's 'Carmen' and Liam Scarlett's 'The Firebird', which runs at the Playhouse, QPAC, from 25 May to June 3.

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Paris, dance and romance

What's it like being a performer at the Moulin Rouge? Here is one dancer's experience.

BRISBANE-BORN Nikki Savage trained at The Dance Works and then at the Queensland University of Technology before auditioning for the Moulin Rouge in 2007. "When I was in high school, I watched an ABC documentary that sparked my interest in the Moulin Rouge . . . I knew immediately I would love to be part of it."

The audition was a tough process and lasted all afternoon. "It was quite intimidating to walk into a room full of tall leggy girls! They tested our technique through a series of combinations and routines in the styles of jazz, ballet and modern. We were also required to show our flexibility and stamina (kicks, splits and cartwheels!), which are necessary to be able to perform the cancan."

Savage arrived in Paris in October the following year. "Straight away, I loved Paris. Even after nine years, I still regularly discover new places here. I have made lovely friends and we have been on many adventures together. It really is a beautiful city." She became principal dancer in November, 2013. "That was a special moment for me!" she says. "My parents had planned a holiday in Paris at that time, so I didn't tell them and surprised them when they came to the show."

She has been captain for the past four years. "I arrived at this role through a series of interviews and auditions. As captain, I'm required to maintain a smooth running of the show and keep the choreography to its original form. That involves taking rehearsals, giving corrections and teaching new roles. It also requires overseeing the general wellbeing of the girls – being someone they can approach and trust when a problem arises. So I have learnt how to handle a variety of personalities from a wide range of nationalities and how to try get the best out of the girls."

Another bonus to living in Paris is its closeness to other European countries. "It is still a novelty for me that just a quick plane ride away can immerse you in a different culture. Working at the Moulin Rouge has also given me the opportunity to see different places. Going to LA and dancing at the Hollywood Bowl has been a personal highlight. And we get the opportunity to dance in different galas and TV programs – it always keep things fresh and interesting."

And there was yet another bonus. "I met my future husband dancing at the Moulin Rouge! He is British and also a dancer. I came to Paris purely to dance, but I found love! We plan to have our wedding in Paris." ~



Moulin Rouge captain
Nikki Savage.

PHOTO: SANDIE BERTRAND

EXPOSING MOTION

Photographer Jon Green talks to Nina Levy about his fascination with capturing the essence of movement.



Experimenting with using elements of choreography to capture movement: an image from Jon Green's 2014 book, "Journey into Silence", taken in 2012. Dancer: Sinead Harte.

ALL PHOTOS: JON GREEN

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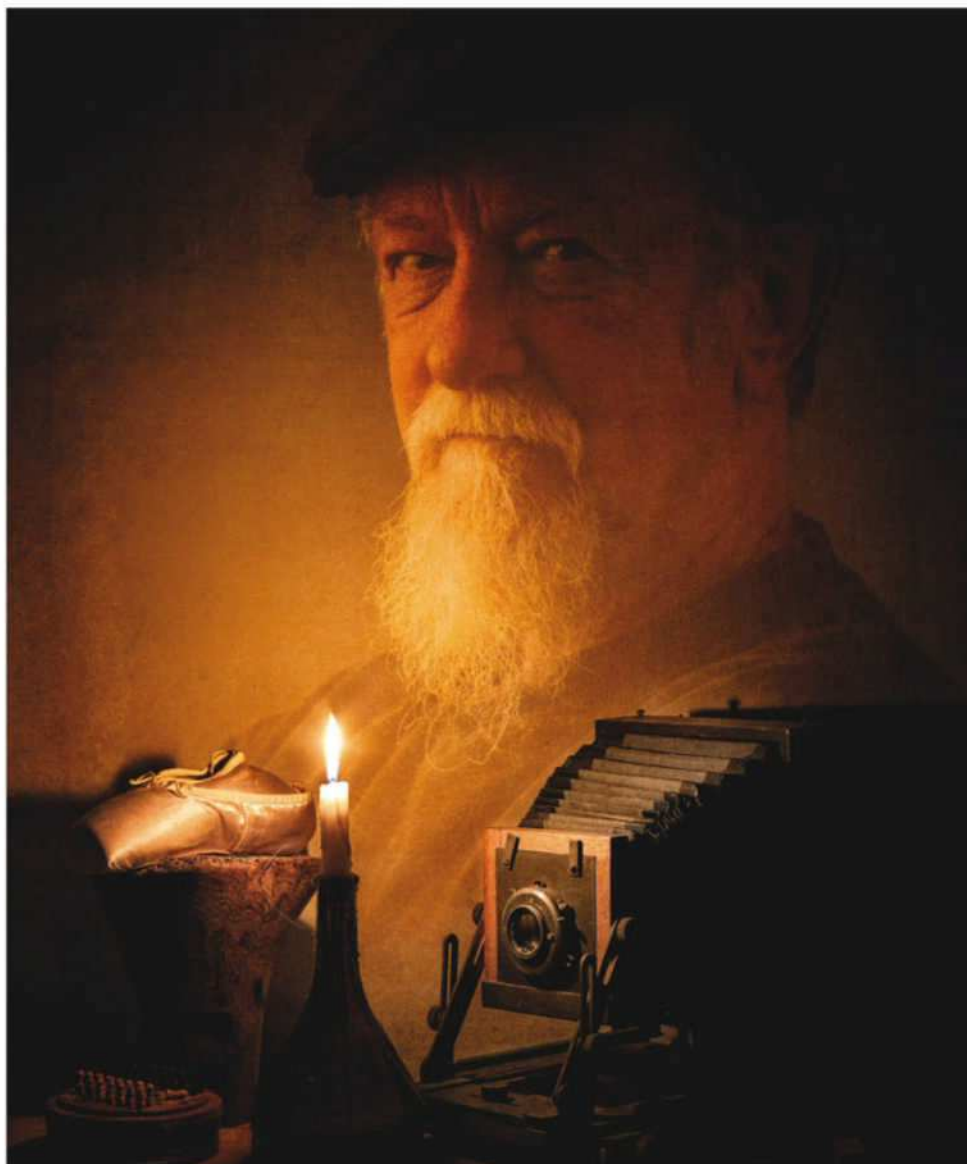
HE name Jon Green is inextricably linked with dance. The West Australian photographer is probably best known to dance aficionados for his 12 years of work photographing West Australian Ballet (2001-2013), but his longest standing relationship

is with the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, where he has been photographing dancers and other performing arts students for 28 years.

Green and I go back a fair way too. Back in 2009, when I was working for Ausdance WA, I had the privilege of watching Green working on a shoot with local dancer Jacqui Claus. What fascinated me was the way Green directed Claus, and the way she responded.

BELOW: Jon Green self portrait.

OPPOSITE: Stills that are anything but: an image from "essence", a collection shot during Green's 2017 residency at All Saints' College. Dancers: ASC students Lara and Megan Burrows.



The sense of energy and purpose in the studio was palpable; the process captivating to watch, a performance in itself.

So when I catch up with Green at his home studio in 2018 and he reveals that he is experimenting with what he describes as "using elements of choreography in directing the movement or capturing movement", it seems to me a natural progression.

Traditionally, dance photography is about immortalising a moment, about pausing movement. Green explains that this approach works better for classical ballet than contemporary dance. "Even though there's a movement phrase [in classical ballet], there's one particular point where the photo is correct from a technical point of view," he says. Contemporary dance is different, he continues. "There could be a whole lot of different 'correct' points within one phrase. So if there's a beautiful 10 to 20 second phrase of movement, I try to put all that in one exposure... and have a bit of a go at choreography myself."

And so Green directs the dancer. "I might say, 'Okay, you start at this point, you stay there for a while and then you move to this point here but you try to complete that phrase within a certain time – 20, 30 seconds, whatever.'"

The results are stills that are anything but; figures that dance through the frame of the photograph. Just as dance is ephemeral, just as movement exists only in the moment, Green's photographs create a sense of the way in which dance exists in the memory; as a series of fleeting, even ghostly, images.

It's always a pleasure for me to listen to Green talk about photography, in part because we share a common interest in capturing dance, whether it be in images or words. But there's more to it than that. Green's passion for photography is infectious.

That passion dates back to childhood. "My interest in photography began when I was four or five," he recalls. "I was intrigued by negatives. I also loved films... my parents used to take us to the drive-in or the movies in Geraldton [a regional town north of Perth]. I would get a torch and try and project images through the negatives because I couldn't understand how you would get a print from a negative. I was totally unaware of the principles of physics and chemistry involved."

After a childhood spent pondering the mysteries of film, Green discovered the answers when he was 17... and a photographer was born. "I was studying applied science chemistry and the subject was photography and microscopy. One of our assignments was to take a photo through a microscope, go into a dark room,





TOP: An image from Green's 2014 book 'Journey into Silence' Dancer: Tara Soh (2006).

RIGHT: So far Green has photographed over 160 women for "EVEolution Photography Project". Pictured here is dancer Annelise Colman (2010).

FAR RIGHT: "No Standing", taken during Green's 2014 Spectrum Gallery residency. Dancer: Charity Ng with Jon Green (self portrait).



“Green’s photographs create a sense of the way in which dance exists in memory, as a series of fleeting, even ghostly images.”

process it and print it,” he remembers. “As soon as I started the process of developing the film I went right back to being that little kid. I would book the dark room at Mt Lawley TAFE. The techs were banging on the doors at 9.30pm, as they were about to lock up. I would say, ‘Just one more!’ It took over my life.”

While the dark room has a special place in Green’s heart, he has also embraced the digital medium. “My work has been freed up by the development of digital photography,” he reflects. “There are all these beautiful dark room techniques too, though.”

Looking forward, Green is taking time away from working for companies and artists to focus on his own work. “I’m currently working on ‘EVEvolution Photography Project’, which incorporates portraits of women in contemporary Australia,” he says. “I’m looking to produce a collection of images for exhibition and publication. The concept is loosely based

on all women originating from Eve, to show the diversity that exists today, a portrait of women in contemporary Australian society. The ‘tie in’ to Eve is that all images will show an apple somewhere in the frame. So far, I’ve photographed over 160 women, including ballet and contemporary dancers. The project will go on for some years yet.” The project has three parts, “The Movement of Eve”, “Portraits of Eve” and “The Abstract Nature of Eve”. As the name suggests, it’s the first part that specifically involves dancers. “Dancers are very close to my heart,” explains Green. “I love photographing movement so who better to work with than dancers?”

Interested in being photographed for EVEvolution Photography Project?

Contact Jon Green: M: 0417 913 521.

*E: evproject@jongreenphotographer.net.au
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Choreographer Stephanie Lake and audio-visual artist Robin Fox talk to Nina Levy about what's involved in their award-winning creative partnership.

GREAT COLLABORATIONS

One of Lake and Fox's most recent works is 'Pile of Bones' (2017). Pictured are dancers Jack Ziesing, Harrison Ritchie-Jones, Samantha Hines and Marlo Benjamin.



HOREOGRAPHER Stephanie Lake and audio-visual artist Robin Fox became a creative team and a couple almost simultaneously. Renowned for works such as *A Small Prometheus* (2013), *Double Blind* (2015) and *Pile of Bones* (2017), the award-winning duo has made over ten works in the seven years that they've been together.

Stephanie Lake

Nina Levy: Which came first, the personal relationship or the professional one?

Stephanie Lake: We became friends first, then partners, and then we began working together. We met in the line for coffee at the Malthouse café. I was familiar with Robin's work and he was familiar with mine because he'd collaborated with Chunky Move before [Lake has a long association with the company both as a choreographer and dancer]. We'd worked with some of the same people. I loved what he did and thought he was a great person. I thought, "It'd be great to work with him." Then the relationship evolved into much more than that. We started working together quite quickly after getting together.

NL: What made you decide to collaborate?

SL: We were both working at Chunky Move studios. I was working on the development *Duel* with amazing dancers Sara Black and Alisdair Macindoe, who Robin knew, and he was working in the studio next door on another project. I kept asking him to have a look at what we were making. I didn't know what music I was going to be working with at that point and I don't think I had any budget. He saw me counting for the dancers to keep rhythm for this quite complex counted section of the work and he said, "Do you want me to give you a tempo track for that? Would that be useful?" And I said, "Actually, that'd be fantastic."

So he gave me something and then it happened organically and kind of cheekily because he was never meant to be the composer for the work. He started feeding me more sounds because I needed them. I can't imagine that work now without Robin's sound component. It's so crucial and reflects so beautifully the idea of the work.

Then later that year we co-created a work called *A Small Prometheus*, which was in the Melbourne Festival. That was much more of an equal production. We've made many works since then, but that was the beginning.

NL: Tell me about your collaborative process.

SL: It's a bit different every time, depending on the project but generally it's very fluid, very back and forth between us. We'll see and hear what each other is making, based on conversations about what it is we're trying to do, the ideas, themes and concepts. We drive each other's work. He will see what's being made in rehearsals and that will inspire him to write something. And then he might give me some sound materials and that will inspire a whole section for me. It goes back and forth right from the beginning to the end of the process.

NL: How do you complement one another?

SL: Robin comes from a background in noise music; electronic, quite avant-garde, quite intense audio-visual shows. I love them but it's nothing like the folky, sentimental aesthetic that I'm into. We're quite opposite in some ways but I think it's the collision of those aesthetics that makes it interesting.

He makes a lot of his works from recordings, not just the computer. There are little samples – in the last work he had the sound of our kids eating popping candy and he put the microphones right in their mouths – so there are just so many layers in the composition and I find it very moving in lots of ways. But his work is less emotionally-driven than mine and I think that is complementary.

We've bent towards each other a bit, too. He does things musically that he never would have done before because it serves the work, and likewise, I feel like I am making things and drawn to exploring things that I never would have before meeting him.

NL: What are the pros and cons of working with your life partner?

SL: The pros are many because we're always available to each other and I can ask late night favours in a way that I wouldn't necessarily if we weren't partners. It's very handy and efficient. There's a shorthand of communication because we know each other so deeply. We don't need to tiptoe around each other – it's a very direct form of communication.

The only con, for me, is that it's more difficult to switch off. If we're working on a

BELOW: Robin Fox (L) and Stephanie Lake (R)

OPPOSITE PAGE: Lee Serle and Lauren Langlois in 'A Small Prometheus', an early collaboration between Lake and Fox.



PHOTO: ROS O'GORMAN



PHOTO: JOSHUA LOVE



major project together the temptation is to talk about it all the time. So that's a challenge, to actually establish that down-time we need.

I said it was a pro to have that direct communication but at other times I think, "We wouldn't talk to each other like that if we weren't partners." We're generally very harmonious but sometimes you get a bit grumpy with your partner, in a way that you wouldn't with someone you didn't know quite so well.

But on the whole I really enjoy it and I'm incredibly proud of what we've made together.

Robin Fox

Nina Levy: When did you begin collaborating artistically with Stephanie?

Robin Fox: The first work I was involved with in Steph's catalogue was *Mix Tape* (2010). While I didn't work [as an audio-visual artist] on *Mix Tape*, my voice features in it because she interviewed me about my ideas about love for that piece. That's how we met properly. We made *Dual* (2013) not long after that. It's still one of my favourites, partly because it was the first one we made together.

NL: Which came first, the artistic or the personal collaboration?

RF: It's actually a little messy because the *Mix Tape* thing wasn't a professional collaboration, it was part of the way we met. We both knew of each other through our mutual association with Chunky Move. The first dance work I ever worked on, strangely enough, was Gideon Obarzanek's *Mortal Engine*, which was kind of a blockbuster. As with most things in my life, it was a trial by fire, an introduction to an art-form at the highest level. Since then I've worked consistently with choreographers and consistently with Steph.



“I think that between my softer approach and her spikier approach we met in the middle. I think it makes for a brilliant combination.”

NL: So is the answer, you don't know? (laughs)

RF: Well the answer would be that we became romantically involved before professionally involved, because we were together before we made *Dual*, which is what I would call the first piece we made together.

NL: What made you decide to collaborate?

RF: Obviously – it's all quite personal isn't it! – when we were falling in love, I guess, we

talked a lot, as young people do, about work, what we were working on, how we felt about various things and so you become so intertwined in that way, when you live together and you share everything.

Steph was making a new work and I was making a lot of music. I think *Dual* started partly because she needed a tempo to work with the dancers. She was in the studio and she was working with a track she didn't like,

I think, and she was only using it for the tempo. I said, 'Why don't I just make you a track that's just a kick drum at a certain tempo and then you don't have to worry about all the other parts of the track?' That's how *Dual* starts now, with exactly that idea. So I think the idea was that I gave her something to work with, and then started feeding her little bits and pieces and then it happened quite organically.

NL: Tell me about your process... how does it work?

RF: For a long time I had a studio at home (I no longer do) and I'd be working at home on musical materials and every now and then Steph'd pop her head around the door and say, "Is that yours? Or are you listening to something?" and I'd say, "No that's mine," and she'd say, "Can I have that?" and I'd put it in a folder with her name, so it didn't go into any other projects.

So there was the dynamic of the home studio but also each new piece would have a new premise. One of the early pieces we made together, *A Small Prometheus*, we technically co-directed, so we talked a lot about the conceptual underpinning of *A Small Prometheus* and what it was about. That led to a lot of experimentation,

'CRUSH', a 2016 Lake/Fox collaboration, created for third year dancers at VCA.



PHOTO: JEFF BUSBY

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'Aorta', a Lake/Fox collaboration created in 2014 for Chunky Move. Pictured (L-R): Josh Mu, James Vu Anh Pham and James Batchelor.



PHOTO: JEFF BUSBY

musically, with the recording of heat in different systems. I built some fire-powered musical sculptures for the set. So that was a very conceptually driven work. All of them are, in a way. They start as ideas that we discuss... but then both of us work in our own mediums quite intuitively. Once the idea is in motion, we're not very big on talking about things. So we then go our separate ways.

I will often provide a whole lot of materials for her to go into the studio with. She starts to find a pathway with some of those sound materials. She'll then give me that feedback, and say, "This is working, I'm not so sure about this." I then go back and refine those materials.

I love to spend time in studio with her and dancers when I can. I like to get a sense of how she's working, and get to know the dancers as well. Each of the pieces develops its own character based on the ethos in the room. I like to be a part of that. I'm not the sort of composer who delivers sound materials to a piece and then just wanders off.

NL: How do you complement one another as artists?

RF: I come from a noise and experimental background. When I met Steph and she was making *Mix Tape*, it was about love and it was a very beautiful piece. I was making quite noisy – and what people might describe as ugly – artworks (although to me they're beautiful). I was into the harsher end of the spectrum.

When we got together, we started to complement each other in that I started making music that I wouldn't otherwise have

made. It tended to be more musical and I really enjoyed that transition because I had been almost avoiding music as part of the avant garde for quite a long time. So to come back to that sense of making musical music was really interesting to me.

I think the noisier part of my aesthetic and the more experimental part of my aesthetic then started to inform Steph's work in the sense that things started to get a little spikier. I think that between my softer approach and her spikier approach we met in the middle. I think it makes for a brilliant combination. It makes for more dynamic pieces.

NL: What are the pros and cons of collaborating with your life partner?

RF: The pros outweigh the cons otherwise we wouldn't do it. The pros are that there's a deep mutual respect there that goes beyond the professional mutual respect that you have with a collaborator. It feels like there's a deeper connection there... which there is. That is one of the biggest benefits – that deep mutual respect and trust of one another. That makes it a really special experience.

But the negative is a work-life balance issue. Particularly in the final stages of a work when the pressure's on, we just don't talk about anything else, from breakfast until bedtime. If there's a con it's that, that the work just over-rides everything.

The other con is that you've got to juggle the kids. When it's show time we can't both be in shows at the same time... but on the plus side the kids absolutely love Steph's work. ☺

What's next for Lake and Fox?

"We'll be premiering a new work in April at Darebin Speakeasy called *Replica*. It's created with a Singaporean and a French dancer, choreographed by me with composition by Robin," says Lake.

The pair is also developing a mass work for 50 dancers, that will premiere at Arts Centre, Melbourne, in September.

Individually each artist has various projects coming up including work with Malthouse Theatre for Lake and work with Melbourne's Chamber Made and Gideon Obarzanek for Fox.

Lake's new work for Expressions Dance Company premiered in March and *Pile of Bones* and *If Never Was Now* will be touring internationally.

The Lake/Fox back catalogue

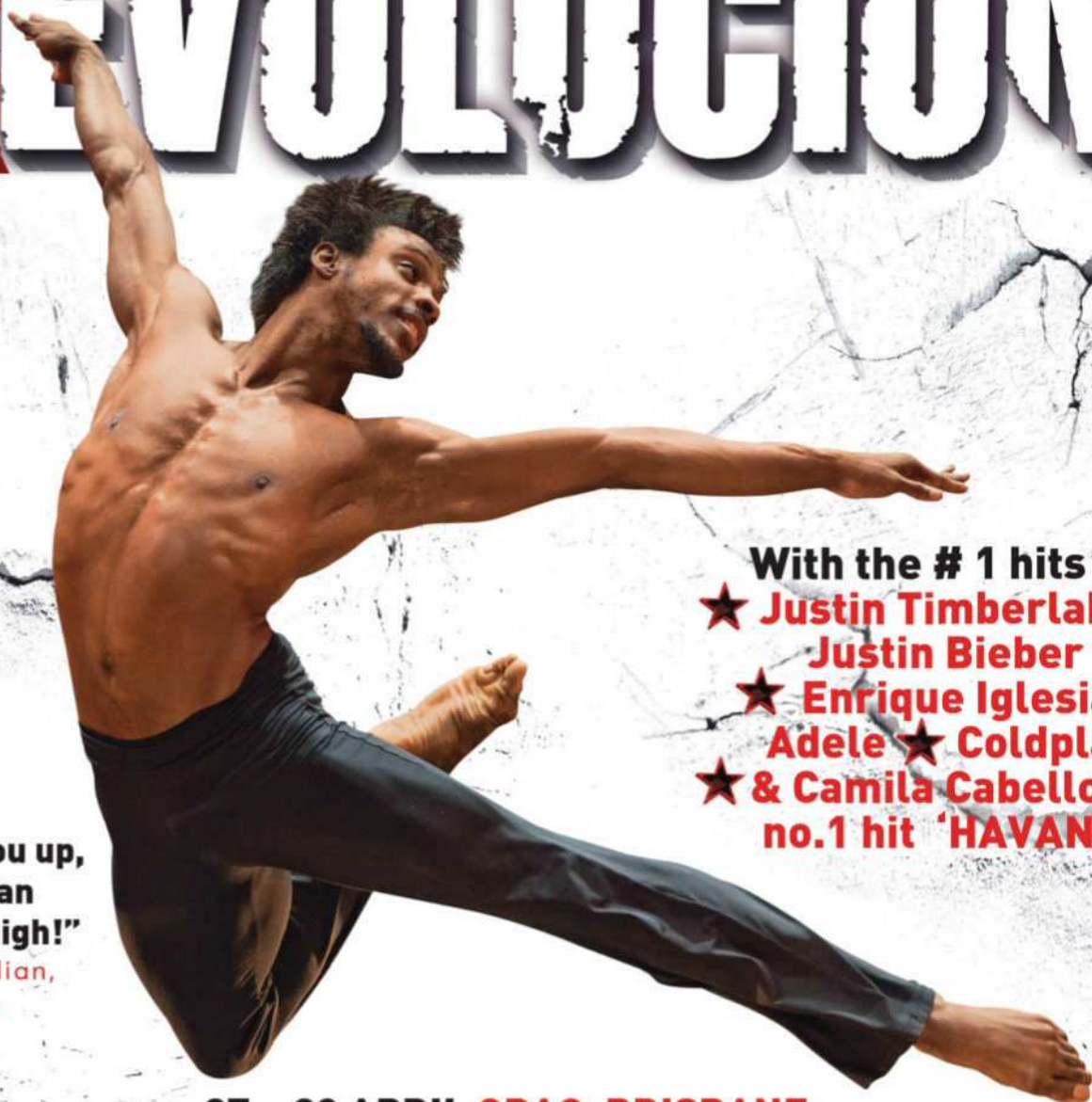
Replica (In development)
Chameleon (2017)
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PHOTO: KATE LONGLEY

MIRACLE MEDICS

The Australian Ballet's amazing medical team is bringing the world to its door, writes [Karen van Ulzen](#).

IN 2015, David Hallberg, the internationally lauded American classical ballet dancer, was in desperate straits. He was suffering an ankle injury that, after much futile treatment including two operations, was still “a swollen red ball” (his words). As he recounts in his recent autobiography, *Body of Work*, he had two options: either retire, or take his chances and seek treatment with the medical team at The Australian Ballet. He chose the latter. “Everything in New York became a far-off memory,” he writes. “I had flown to the bottom of the world. Now I was in it for the long haul. This was the last-ditch effort.”

He was not wrong. It was seven months before he could jump without using the barre, and two-and-a-half years before he could consider himself fully recovered. That’s a long time in dancer years. But he did recover, where before such an option had seemed hopeless. His gratitude to The Australian Ballet has been naked and public. He even distributed leaflets to the audience at his Australian comeback performances, saying: “The Australian Ballet in its entirety has brought me to this moment I share with you tonight... I am so deeply grateful to David McAllister and the team I have worked so intimately and extensively with... They have not only nurtured me back to health physically but in true Aussie form, they have opened their hearts and, through their generosity, given me an artistic rebirth.”

The AB medical team to which he owes his rebirth consists of a multidisciplinary group of experts. Principal physiotherapist Sue Mayes recently gained her PhD in research at LaTrobe University (and is currently researching ankle and hip-joint injuries in professional ballet dancers as part of the partnership between The Australian Ballet and La Trobe University). She is joined by body conditioning specialist Paula Baird, ballet mistress and rehabilitation specialist Megan Connelly, strength and conditioning instructor Sakis Michelis (all former dancers

“If you catch injuries early, and then very gradually get the dancers back into training, they may not miss out on very much.” Here, Christiano Martino ‘works out’.



PHOTO: KATE LONGLEY

themselves) as well as other physiotherapists, myotherapists, a sports and exercise physician and a general practitioner.

In addition to the in-house team, the company employs externally a consultant psychologist, podiatrist, dietitian and surgeon. Together they pool their expertise to create a co-ordinated dream-team of medical miracle makers.

It hasn't always been thus. Until the introduction of an in-house medical team, the dancers had to seek treatment outside the company. Injuries were rife. The combination of the AB's busy schedule (one of the world's busiest), touring obligations and the increasing athleticism of contemporary classical choreography was playing havoc with the dancers' bodies. The injury rate was obviously bad for morale and bad for performance standards. Furthermore, the company's WorkCover premiums were soaring.

In response, the company appointed a sports and exercise physician, (the late) Ken Crichton, as medical director, in 1994. This in itself was an acknowledgement that medical expertise from the sports world could be helpful to dancers. Mayes was appointed as the company's first full-time in-house physio in 1997. A second followed in 2002. As the pool of expertise grew, the approach to the prevention of injury and rehabilitation became increasingly sophisticated and effective. With the company's resources properly dedicated to their dancers' health and welfare, the rate of injuries began to decrease.

Today, dancers no longer just "swing a leg" to get warm or throw on a pair of legwarmers to "stay warm" after a show. Instead, the team has adapted and implemented many high-level sports' practices to the dancers' warm-up and cool-down regime. Dancers will immerse their bodies in ice after strenuous performances and use hot and cold spas for recovery. Weight and resistance training is used as preventative and rehabilitative exercise, for both men and women. Pilates also plays a big role, as well as myriad exercises devised by the team's combined brain power. This year, a huge new medical facility is being constructed at the AB's headquarters in Melbourne, with a consulting room and gym and work-out areas.

Another important development has been the analysis of repertoire. At the start of each year, members of the medical team view video footage of the forthcoming choreography, noting the particular stresses and strains of the technique. They then devise a program of exercises to help prepare and support the dancers' bodies through the movements.

Other areas of focus have been a slow progression into workload following breaks or injury recovery and the encouragement of injured dancers to include a psychologist in their treatment. Very important is an open door policy, so dancers feel free to consult about even minor complaints. According to Mayes, in the past dancers tended to hide or disguise pain or minor injuries in case they would lose out on performance opportunities. "They had a

tendency to gobble anti-inflammatories," Mayes says. Now they are encouraged to declare their niggles straight away. "If you catch injuries early, and then very gradually get the dancers back into training, they may not miss out on very much."

As a result, the turn-around in injuries has been "phenomenal".

"We've had no hip arthroscopies for 12 years now, where we used to do a couple a year," Mayes says. "[In comparison] the number of arthroscopies throughout the world has escalated. It is now six years since any dancer has injured the hip and been unable to perform.

"As far as ankle surgery goes, we've only had four in 14 years. Again, these used to be very common – you'd have two or three a year, easily.

"We've also had a dramatic decline in the stress fracture rate. We've had one second metatarsal stress fracture since 2002. Currently all bone injuries are very low.

"The rate of ankle sprain is similar [to the past], but they're minor compared to previous injuries. Our calf tears have also reduced significantly since we introduced the calf rise endurance into class." [See box this page.]

Such is the Medical Team's success, major sports organisations and Olympic athletes are

Rising to the challenge

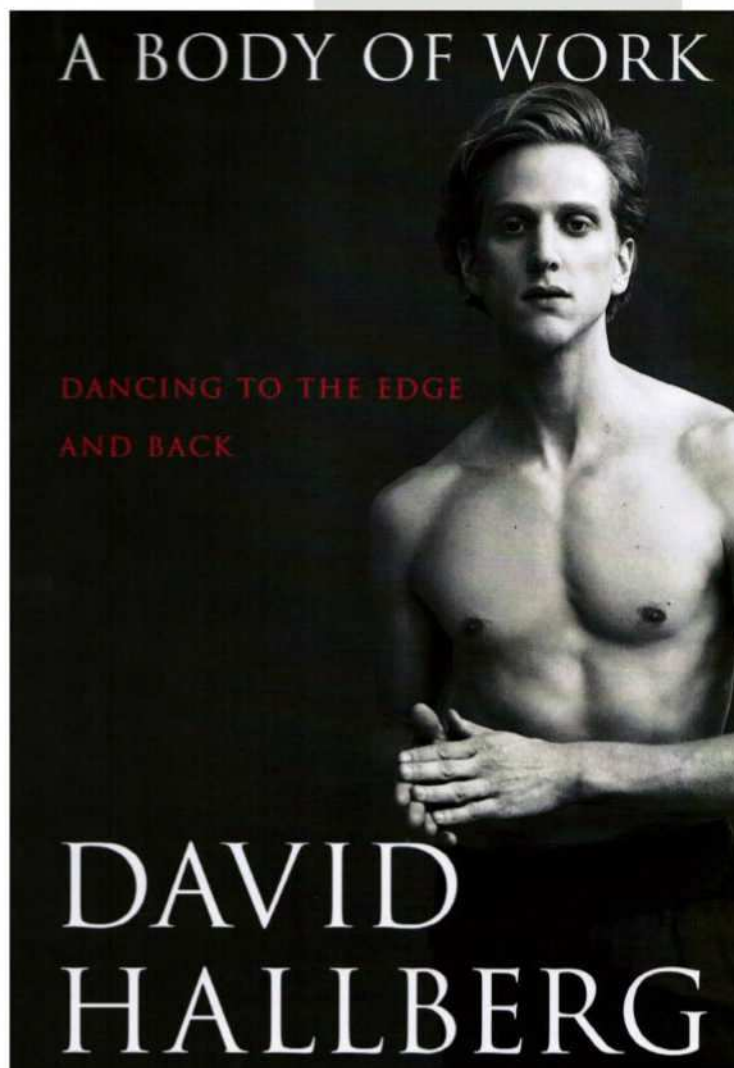
One of the Medical Team's main successes is in the radical reduction of calf tears, thanks to the introduction of a simple exercise to class – calf raises.

Yes, dancers already do numerous calf raises! But a mass screening of all the company found that many were surprisingly weak. "We were horrified to find that some could only do eight!" Mayes says.

"When we looked back at the injury data, we found that anyone who couldn't do 25 rises on one leg in the parallel position had had [a form of ankle or calf injury]."

In response, single leg rises have been introduced to the end of barre.

"We aim for 16 to 24 in class, later in the day building up to a true capacity of 30 to 35. But the quality is as important as the number. They must be in perfect alignment."



'A Body of Work', David Hallberg's autobiography, is published by Touchstone and available in good bookstores.

OPPOSITE: Principal physio Sue Mayes: she is having phenomenal success in reducing injuries.

PHOTO: LYNETTE WILLS



turning to it for help. Collingwood AFL footballer Ben Reid is one such example. He began treatment with Paula Baird-Colt following desperate attempts to fix an injured calf (that included an actovegin – calf blood – injection program and shock treatment in Berlin) and was impressed at what he saw. “I remember watching these girls who weighed about 40 kilos and I’m closer to 100kg and they were making me look like a weakling, really,” Reid is quoted as saying in the *Herald Sun*.

“Collingwood AFL footballer Ben Reid is one such example. He began treatment with Paula Baird-Colt following desperate attempts to fix an injured calf.”

“I would be doing some of the same exercises, and I’d be shaking... They were in there for eight hours a day, working on their body, it was phenomenal. I really looked up to them.

“And Paula has been (pauses), well, the stuff I’m doing now I don’t think I would be doing if it wasn’t for her.”

Similarly, North Melbourne AFL footballers Sam Wright and Ben Jacobs turned to the company for help after having been off the field last year with potentially career-ending foot injuries. “They are now back in training”, Mayes says, and hopeful of returning to action this year.

Cricket Australia is another organisation that is benefitting from the AB’s program, and is collaborating on ankle injury research.

For David Hallberg, the treatment began with one-on-one daily sessions (three hours in the morning; two in the afternoon). Baird-Colt began the process with Hallberg, supervising a program of meticulously designed and targeted

exercises that, he writes, seemed to have nothing to do with ballet. Megan Connelly was instrumental in correcting his ballet technique and gradually building him to performing at full strength.

One of the main strengthening exercises he was prescribed was “walking up and down a stairwell on a half demi-pointe” to the beat of a metronome, beginning with just 12, and slowly increasing the number and speed over many months.

“The team’s initial and overreaching goal was to give me the education I needed to be able to troubleshoot any physical hiccup myself,” he writes. “I had no prior education in this regard. Like many dancers in New York, I had always expected to have someone else fix me... This ‘fix me’ mentality also led to surgery. Americans view surgery as the fix... In Melbourne, the team’s philosophy was that surgery was practically never an option.”

“We support them to become the masters of their own bodies,” agrees Mayes. “We give them the tools. We don’t want them to be dependent on the physio team.”

Hallberg returned the stage in 2015 in Sydney as Franz in *Coppelia*. “His naturalness and ease, along with his musicality, made the heart sing,” wrote critic Deborah Jones. So far his ankle is holding – he recently made his debut with the Royal Ballet in *Giselle* in March and is listed for a full schedule at his home company this year.

It would have been a tragedy if a talent as rare as Hallberg’s had ended before its proper time. He is a very public example of how fragile a dancer’s career can be; how easily brought to a premature end by a wrong twist or move, a misalignment or fatigue. At The Australian Ballet a team is working behind the scenes to ensure such devastating endings are no longer commonplace, and are instead becoming as rare as great talent. ☺

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Pilates also plays a big role – pictured is Valerie Tereshchenko (left) and Lisa Craig.

Ballet mistress and rehabilitation specialist Megan Connelly.



PHOTO: LYNETTE WILLS



PHOTO: KATE LONGLEY

Unblurring the lines

Shocking claims of sexual harassment in the theatre world have made us all rethink how we behave toward our colleagues. What are your rights? Sally Clark asked Chloe Dallimore, President of Equity, the performer's division of the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance.



Chloe Dallimore: 'No-one should feel unsafe in the workplace.'

CHLOE Dallimore is a leading triple threat performer with many outstanding performances and many awards to her name. She is committed to using her extensive experience in musical theatre to make certain the younger membership work under better workplace conditions.

Q In light of recent revelations and allegations against Harvey Weinstein and other prominent people in the performing arts industry, how can Australian artists best learn their rights regarding sexual harassment, bullying and feeling unsafe or compromised in the workplace?

Every workplace and training institution should have a Code of Conduct covering expected behaviour in the workplace. Equity is working with theatre companies and Live Performance Australia to help employers update and revise their current codes of conduct. If you are unsure of your workplace's Code of Conduct, ask your company manager or stage manager. No one should ever feel unsafe in their workplace. If you don't feel you are getting the answers and/or support you need to do your job safely, you can call MEAA for free and confidential advice.

Q Are there guidelines to protect you when you are required to "challenge" your own standards for the sake of creating "art"? Is there a standard "code of conduct" applied to performing arts? And if so, how and why does it differ from rules that might apply if you worked in a bank?

Our industry and therefore our workplace is unique. No other workplace is like it. We have to physically, emotionally and mentally challenge ourselves in order to create. How do we keep our workplace creative, inspiring and fun, and get the job done, but also keep everyone physically, emotionally and mentally safe?

In an Equity survey on Sexual Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace completed by 1500 respondents in mid-2016, 40% claimed to have experienced sexual harassment, bullying or another form of misconduct. In light of this, our industry employers have acknowledged that we have to work together and assess how we can achieve safety for ALL workers. This is not just about performers. This is not just about women. Equity has received reports of





What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. If a reasonable person would anticipate that the behaviour might make you feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated, it may be sexual harassment.

You have a right to say “NO” to sexual harassment and remove yourself from any situation where you feel unsafe.

Sexual harassment is illegal under the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984. All employers, regardless of their size, have a legal duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

Types of sexual harassment include:

- Sexually suggestive or offensive comments, insults, or jokes or imagery.
- Intrusive questions or comments about your private life or physical appearance.
- Requests for sex or sexual activities.
- Inappropriate staring or leering.
- Unwelcome touching or physical contact.
- Sexually explicit or harassing messages (including text or social media), phone calls, emails, or images.

Sexual harassment doesn't have to be ongoing. A single incident can constitute sexual harassment.

Some instances of sexual harassment can also be criminal offences, including physical or sexual assault. These offences should be reported to the police.

Extracted from the MEAA fact sheet. For the full document go to: <https://www.meaa.org/campaigns/sexual-harassment-in-the-spotlight/>

“We all have to be accountable and all have to be part of a change for the better.”

harassment and bullying from every sector of our live performance industry, from men, women and LGBTQI.

Q And when the code has been breached, what is the way to seek a resolution?

If you feel at risk in the live performance workplace, the most obvious person to reach out to is your stage manager. The stage manager will most likely take your report to the company manager, and it should be attended to by upper management from there. No report should go unacknowledged or undocumented. From our survey, it seems that a big obstacle to resolution is that the report is not dealt with in an appropriate manner, sometimes making the scenario worse, or the report is not dealt with at all.

Q Can the industry make any changes in its current provisions, or are they already adequate?

There is so much we can do better, and employers and also training institutions have already been reaching out to Equity because they want to do this better.

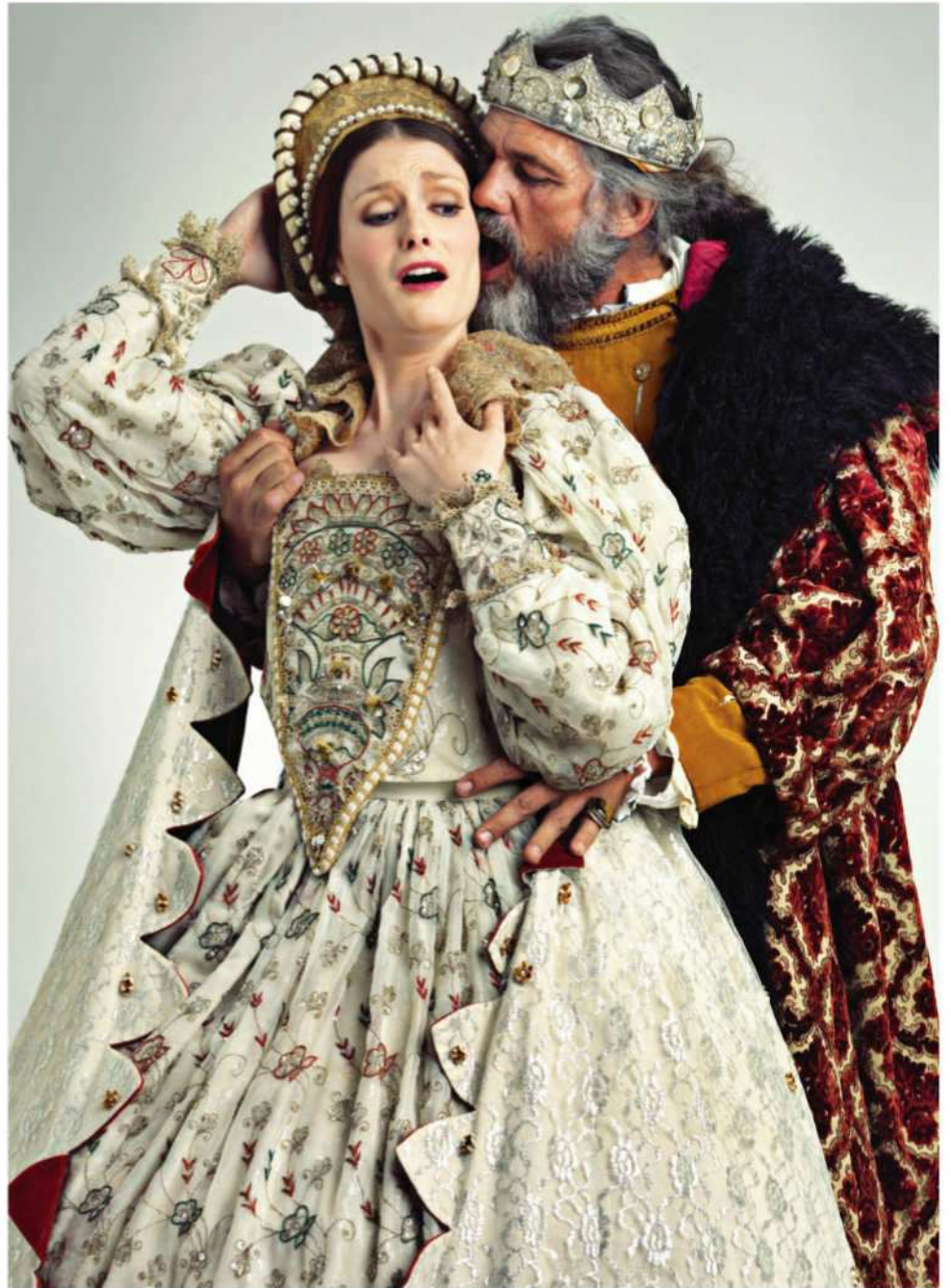
Q It has been said that, “Backstage culture can be lewd”. Who is responsible for setting the tone of how artists treat each other backstage?

We ALL have to be accountable and we all have to be part of the change for the better. We all have to know we can be honest about feeling unsafe and be confident we won't be ridiculed or disregarded. And if we witness what we think is harassment or bullying, we need to not just be observers, but to feel safe in “calling out” such behaviour.

Q What are the rules around nudity and appropriate costuming?

Nudity is something that is usually dealt with at the time of negotiating the contract, and is up to the individual. Any production involving nudity is required to state this “up front”. The performer has the right to not audition for or not accept that role.

Costuming is a trickier scenario and needs further discussion. Costumes are usually



created by a highly trained designer and the artist usually doesn't have any input. The head of wardrobe is usually present at all costume fittings, so if you don't feel comfortable with what you were trying on, I would suggest this is the person to tell at the time of the fitting. This allows time for discussion and resolution.

Q If you don't have an agent, how would you best proceed?

Call Equity! There is very little that Equity can't help with, so if in doubt, pick up the phone and give us a call on 1300 656 513.

ENDNOTE

For a broader understanding of how the Australian Human Rights Commission defines sexual harassment, go to: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/recognising-and-responding-sexual-harassment-workplace>

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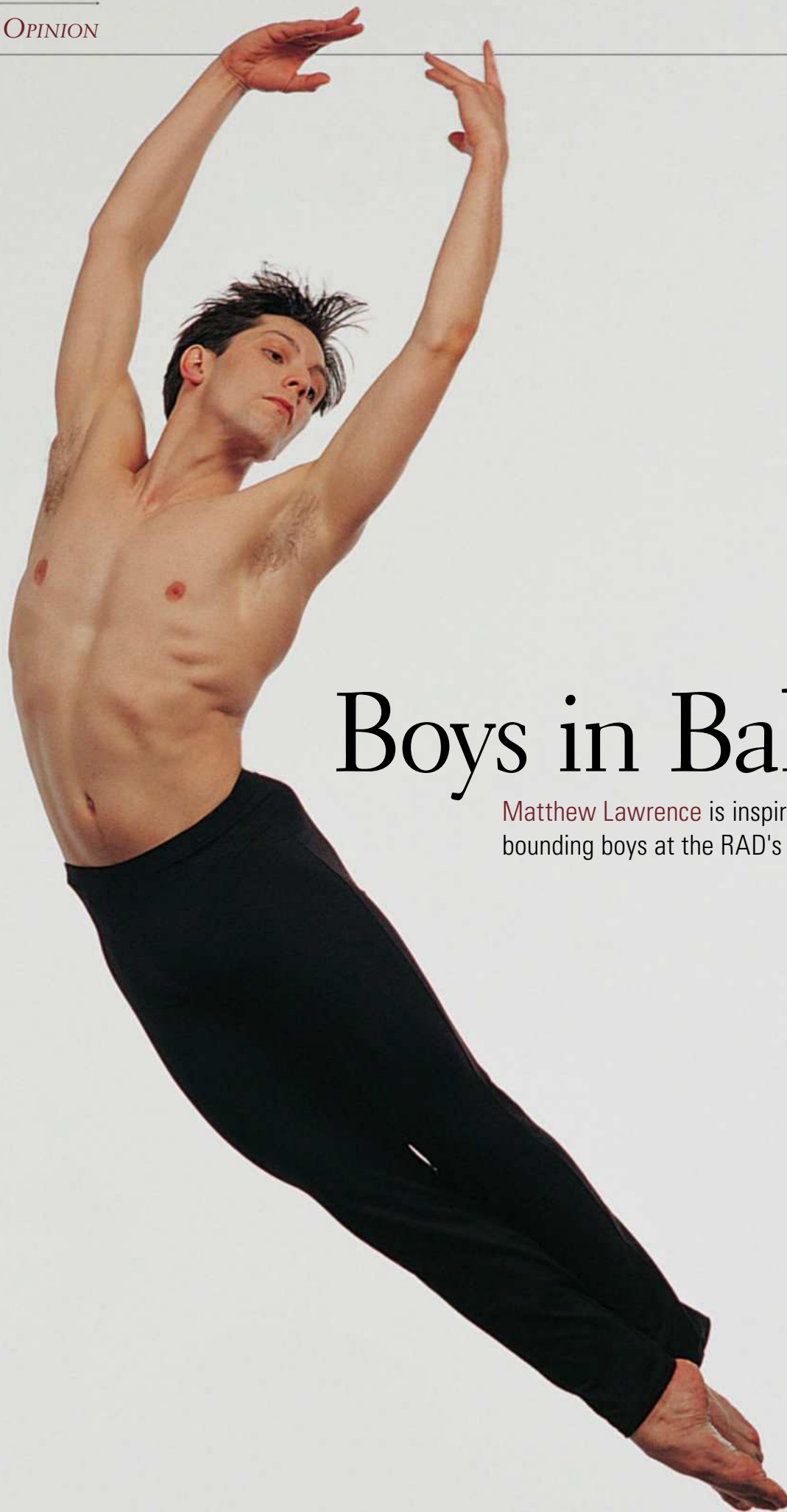
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#XX2018



Boys in Ballet

Matthew Lawrence is inspired by the bounding boys at the RAD's Project B.

FOR two days in early January, more than 60 dancing boys bounced down hallways and bounded into studios at Adelaide's College of the Arts. Absolute beginners (some unconverted) to advanced students aged seven to 17 were welcomed to the Royal Academy of Dance's (RAD) Project B summer school for boys. Some preferred hip hop and tap, others ballet and contemporary. After two, full, ballet teaching days, I was exhausted and thrilled in equal measure.

What an exhilarating time it was! We had TV cameras from Channel 9's weekend show following us, along with other mainstream news outlets promoting the event and Project B. Excited testosterone sprinted this way and that. Down hallways to the uber cool brothers, Joel and Jesse Rasmussen, and their respective hip hop and tap classes. Then upstairs to contemporary guru David Williams, and across to me for some last-minute Project B rehearsals before the cameras started rolling! The summer school was busier than a Mentos in a Coke bottle. And, importantly, all the boys seemed inspired to dance more, and came away with like-minded mates.

During the summer school, it struck me that teaching young boys ballet is worlds apart from teaching girls. Forget Mars and Venus, try a different solar system. Ballet, in its natural form – of gradual progression from barre to centre – rests more

comfortably with a girl's nature. Seven-year-old boys find standing still nigh-on impossible, unless it is part of a game, or competition. Our DNA is to blame: we are buffalo hunters. Like hunters, stillness is achieved in pursuit (the game), followed a sudden burst of energy (the reward).

Sport taps into these primitive drivers naturally. When training our young athletic artists, I believe we can learn a lot from how sport engages with boys. Sport's training emphasises drills, performing simple steps in repetition with little break, chewing energy and bolstering competitiveness. Simple props – like cones – are used to encourage engagement through fun learning. And a sports whistle would be hugely beneficial in a studio packed full of lads; it easily attracts attention, without compromising the coach's tonsils and dignity (I am only half joking).

Central to Project B was former principal dancer (and also friend and past colleague at Birmingham Royal Ballet) Iain Mackay's engaging choreography. Set over four sections and accessed through the RAD's website, Mackay's dance challenges the viewer to learn his steps and upload themselves performing it. It was inspired by his son, and borrows popular culture motifs, such as "the dab" (a hip-hop move turned trendy sports celebration); Usain Bolt's "Lightning Bolt" celebration; Transformer poses; and playful muscle flexing.



LEFT: Classical male dance is thrilling, but only a very small percentage of boys are taking ballet exams.

RIGHT: Matthew Lawrence leads a class of boys at a recent Sydney summer school.

“Is it fine to highlight that ballet can be cool and masculine as well? Bloody oath!”



Lawrence with boys at Project B.

PHOTO: SUZANNE OPTIZ, COURTESY OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE.

I was tasked with teaching parts of Mackay's Project B choreography and quickly found myself corrected: "No you don't do 'the dab' like that!" – another lad interjected – "To do it properly, you have to sneeze into your elbow." Oh boy, these young lads knew the moves better than me ... *and* they had been practising – unprecedented!

When marketing products to young male dancers, like Project B's choreography, the pitch needs to attract existing and potential customers. Hip hop rules dance's male demographic at present. It is masculine, contemporary and cool. Mackay's choreography is similarly appealing. And importantly, it's something to which ballet-resistant dads relate. When we are converting boys to ballet, we must acknowledge the father-son relationship. Ninety per cent of the time the scenario is: an open mum, but dad is worried about what his mates will say at work.

In the UK, Project B has raised debate over where to direct the sales pitch. Some commentators decry the use of "macho" references to attract boys to dance. "I believe we need to ditch superheroes and instead showcase a range of performers across the gender spectrum," says UK academic Chris Marlow. My view: I see ballet, out of all art-forms, as a positive exemplar of advocating sexual inclusiveness and challenging gender stereotypes. Yet, there is a time and place for everything. Will promoting these ideals in this embryonic environment attract fathers and sons to ballet? Um, no. Is it fine to highlight that ballet can be cool and masculine as well? Bloody oath!

One thing everyone agrees on, is that Project B is a great and needed initiative for our community. To give you some perspective, out of the RAD's quarter of a million students examined world-wide, only 1.8% are male, which is abysmal. In the lead-up to the RAD's centenary year in 2020, the organisation would love to raise that figure to around 4-5 per cent.

In ballet, girls are a constant stream, boys are waves. As popular media influences depart – like *So You Think You Can Dance?* – so do boys. Back in my day it was Leroy from *Fame* who sparked an upsurge – followed by a famine. A more constant stream of boys can only be manufactured from within dance organisations, hosting crowd-raising and targeted initiatives like Project B. That is why it is great that Project B's message seems to be connecting with popular media. Who knows, maybe the next *Billy Elliot* will be inspired while watching. ☺

Matthew Lawrence is a former principal artist with the Australian Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet and Queensland Ballet. He is currently an associate lecturer for the dance department of Queensland University of Technology.



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REVIEWS

Michael Clark Company

TO A SIMPLE ROCK 'N' ROLL... SONG

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE
JANUARY

Enthusiastic audience response reflects outstanding success. ~

JUDGING by the enthusiastic audience response to Michael Clark Company's performance of *to a simple rock 'n' roll... song*, this production is an outstanding success. Described in the written program as a musical homage to three composers who have inspired director/choreographer Michael Clark, the program is divided musically into three acts (one for each composer). Yet the second and third acts are much more vibrant and powerful than the first. Perhaps the explanation for this is that the first act is not simply a musical homage (to Erik Satie) but also a choreographic one. Michael Clark references works by Frederick Ashton, Merce Cunningham and Yvonne Rainer that were also choreographed to music by Satie.

The understated neoclassicism of Ashton's *Monotones I and II*, juxtaposed with the clean, early-modern lines characteristic of Cunningham technique, don't fuse with Clark's own idiosyncratic movement language; but they do provide a contextual counterpoint from which one can appreciate the second and third acts that much more. This is a clever way of taking the audience on a chronological journey, both musically and choreographically, which is satisfying and meaningful on both levels.

The second act is set to music by Patti Smith, and Michael Clark's movement captures the kind of establishment-defying cool that was characteristic of Patti Smith's music in her heyday. At this point in the program the Michael Clark Company's eight dancers really came to life. It's as if the first act was just a rehearsal, or warm-up, for what was to follow. They danced

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PHOTO: PRUDENCE UPTON

Oxana Panchenko in Michael Clark Company's 'to a simple rock 'n' roll... song'.

with style, conviction and verve, characterised by a rubbery, loose quality that allowed them to move seamlessly from classical technique to movements derived from popular dance. As they were listed only as a group, I cannot single out any one dancer for particular mention, but they were all very good.

Costuming and set design for this production is minimal, but effective. The dancers wear figure-hugging unitards (a different style for each act) attributed to Stevie Stewart and Michael

Clark, while the many coloured hues of Charles Atlas's lighting design play an integral part in setting the scene for each act. With the exception of *Painting by Numbers*, a stage adaptation of a video installation by Charles Atlas

that forms the backdrop to the second act, visual focus centres purely on the dancers.

In the third and final act, music by the late David Bowie gave Michael Clark full licence to put the quirky eccentricity of Bowie's music into movement – and this was where the Michael Clark Company really came into its own. Watching this act, I saw the rhythm and melody of Bowie's music played out onstage in more detail than I could ever have heard simply by listening. "See the music, hear the dance," is a quote attributed to George Balanchine and most frequently discussed in conjunction with his own ballets; but in the second and third acts of *to a simple rock 'n' roll... song* Michael Clark achieves it too. ~

– GERALDINE HIGGINSON



PHOTO: WENDELL TEODORO

Up close and personal: SDC's 'Stuck in the Middle With You'.


Sydney Festival

STUCK IN THE MIDDLE WITH YOU (SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY)

SYDNEY FESTIVAL VILLAGE

YOU ANIMAL YOU (FORCE MAJEURE)

CARRIAGEWORKS
JANUARY

Two visually spectacular works. 

LISTED under “Visual Arts and Installations” rather than “Dance” on the Sydney Festival website, *Stuck In The Middle with You*, by Sydney Dance Company (SDC) and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, is a free, eight minute virtual reality experience that was available at the Sydney Festival Village space in Hyde Park. With only two headsets available, there was a limit to how many people could experience it. The experience was, however, an overwhelmingly positive one. There is a narrative structure to this filmed experience, in which the viewer finds themselves sitting in the stalls of Sydney’s Ros Packer Theatre, gradually falling asleep, we are told, before suddenly materialising on


stage, “stuck in the middle” of a dance performance choreographed by Gideon Obarzanek for this project.

The VR technology gives you a three-dimensional space in which, whatever way you turn, everything makes sense. There is an internal logic to *Stuck In The Middle With You* and the journey it takes you on that makes this a more immersive experience than it would otherwise be. Once “on-stage” with the dancers, various dancers turn to you and talk. “What are you doing here?” asks one, while others go on to talk about what dance means to them or how they started dancing, in a brief series of vignettes, answering questions (perhaps your own?) posed by the film’s inner voice. Director Matthew Bate has done a fantastic job with this film, introducing young and old alike to SDC’s dancers in a way which feels up close and personal, while giving the viewer the chance to see a dance performance from a performer’s perspective.

Force Majeure’s *You Animal You* is also visually spectacular. It was performed in the round at Carriageworks with just five performers, but a wide array of props and moveable pieces of set design which became an integral part of the action. A tower on wheels, a megaphone, an enormous plastic bag and a wind machine that blew confetti this way and that gave the performance a type of carnival/sporting atmosphere. Actress Heather

Mitchell cut a menacing figure as the one player who controlled the other performers; pitting them against each other in a series of games at her will. According to the written program, this game-like environment, “reveals behaviours that are slowly breaking down the chain of command, looking for a way to break free from the desensitisation passed on from generation to generation.”

You Animal You is an interesting, but perplexing work. For instance, given that a mother/daughter relationship had been intimated between performers Lauren Langlois and Mitchell earlier in the piece, why did Mitchell seemingly give birth in the final scene to another performer, Harrison Elliott, rather than Langlois?

That said, in this production, director Danielle Micich demonstrates the ability to extract strong performances and characterisations from each member of the cast (Elliott, Ghenoa Gela, Raghav Handa, Langlois, Mitchell) and Kelly Ryall’s music successfully encapsulated the work’s competitive game-like atmosphere. But top honours should go to Michael Hankin for his set design, and to Damien Cooper for his lighting – in particular, the impressive looking circular rig hanging above the performance space which is also a key part of this production’s aesthetic. 

- GERALDINE HIGGINSON

Supercell Dance Festival

THE INQUISITION OF THE BIG BAD WOLF; EVERYTHING REMAINS; FORECAST; (MIS)CONCEIVE

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, BRISBANE
FEBRUARY

Heavily patronised and enthusiastically received, the festival more than justified its injection of government funding. ❧

BRISBANE'S Supercell Dance Festival blossomed in its second year, into a week-long feast of dance performances, master classes, forums and lectures, spread across three venues – JWCOCA, Brisbane Powerhouse, and the temporary performance space Flowstate, at Southbank. Heavily patronised and enthusiastically received, the festival more than justified its injection of federal and state government funding.

Performances from national and international artists were as widely diverse in theme as in style of delivery. Prying Eye's *The Inquisition of the Big Bad Wolf* was first. Although a little too long, it is nonetheless a creatively conceived and tightly delivered exploration of anxieties via the reimagining and contextualising of well-known wolf tales.

A cleverly crafted script by dramaturge Veronica Neave gives performers Lizzie and Zaimon Vilmanis, and Charles Ball deliciously witty lines to deliver, woven between movement sequences that are sometimes equally hilarious. The use of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, blaring from a mobile phone, provides ample opportunity for parody of the classical ballet construct.

Guest performer Alinta McGrady, as the assistant with the deadpan demeanour, was the perfect foil to the madness, but also showed off a magnificent voice. However, it was Lizzie Vilmanis who anchored the work with a dramatic performance that ran the gamut from timidity to rage, while still showing the physical acumen that has always made her a compelling dancer to watch.

Everything Remains is, according to program notes, "choreography for a tired body," and also an examination of the effects of lived experiences on the body. Created by Juli Apponen (Denmark) and Jon R. Skulberg (Norway), it was performed solo by Apponen in the nude. Lying face-down, with feet pointing to the audience, she very slowly kneels to standing and proceeds to circumnavigate the space, one slow step at a time. It was initially riveting, as there was nothing to focus on except Apponen's body, objectified but also depersonalised by the lack of any expression in the movement or her face. Three small tattoos,

a couple of scars, the shape of her legs, and her buttocks, all became objects to contemplate.

A minimalist score of piano and strings by Lil Lacy builds slowly with the movement, finishing (after about an hour) in a crescendo of percussive noise, accompanied by intense strobe effects, while Apponen, dervish-like, spins, leaps and whirls through a low fog. It is a fascinating work, carefully crafted and performed, but way too long.

"Forecast: an Australian Convergence" was also a long evening, but of four works by different artists. Expressions Dance Company gave a short but mesmerising preview of an element from Stephanie Lake's new work, premiering in their March "Converge" season, while Singapore's T.H.E Dance Company presented *Pure*, choreographed by Swee Boon Kuik, with performers Anthea Seah and Billy Keohavong. *Pure* examines the complexities of living together. This duet had the fluidity of Tai Chi; the body weaving and undulating hypnotically, above firmly planted feet. There was a wonderful use of audible breath, with both dancers' performances quite mesmerising.

Also from Singapore was Daniel Kok's *Cheerleader of Europe*. A solo work performed by Kok, this bold and witty look at the European Union and notions of nationhood, begins with an intimately delivered tale about his time as a conscripted soldier.

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Kok had the audience in his thrall. In sporting attire he ran, leapt and cartwheeled his way across the stage, cheerleading moves enthusiastically performed with gaudy gold and silver pompoms. It was 45 minutes of well-crafted theatre.

Last on the "Forecast" program, *The Crossing*, co-choreographed by The Farm's Gavin Webber with Kayah Guenther, is a funny, but also thought provoking piece, that explores the meeting point between two very different artists and their desires for self-expression. The diminutive but wily Guenther, a firecracker of a performer, turns the tables on the able-bodied Webber, in a series of combative sequences that drew much laughter.

(Mis)Conceive was the final work shown as part of Supercell and the most completely satisfying. Choreographed by Thomas E. S. Kelly and performed in grey jeans and t-shirts by Kelly with Taree Sansbury, Caleena Sansbury, and Natalie Pelarek, it manipulates an archetypal Aboriginal movement construct, to explore and reveal "modern (mis)understandings of indigeneity." Grey hoodies when worn, or not worn, are used to create different scenarios that challenge our preconceptions, while much of the movement, to a percussive soundscape also by Kelly, has a rhythm that is hypnotic. It was tightly structured, entertaining, and thought provoking. ❧

– DENISE RICHARDSON



Bold and witty:
Daniel Kok's
'Cheerleader
of Europe'.

PHOTO: BERNIE NG



PHOTO: SERGEY FEWNEV

Complicated and challenging duos hint at compassion in Patrick Delcroix's 'Paradise Within'. Pictured: April Maguire and Ludovico Di Ubaldo.

West Australian Ballet

**MILKY WAY:
BALLET AT THE QUARRY**
THE QUARRY AMPHITHEATRE
FEBRUARY

Immersive, spiritual and uplifting. ❧

WEST Australian Ballet's "Milky Way: Ballet at the Quarry" is an ambitious program of four short contemporary works, three of which are premières. The program's concluding work *Milnjiya, Milky Way – River of Stars* is the centrepiece of the evening and was conceived in an artistic collaboration between Larrakia man Gary Lang's NT Dance Company, WAB, and renowned operatic soprano, Yorta Yorta woman Deborah Cheetham. The cast includes traditional cultural artists from Yirrkala, bringing together multiple First Nations and dancers from both companies. Inspired lighting, by Joseph Mercurio, and the rich surround-sound quality of the recorded music, enhanced all four dance works.

After a welcome to country from Nyungar Wadjuk cultural leader Walter McGuire, French choreographer Patrick Delcroix's *Paradise Within* took us into a sort of "day-in-the-life" of a young man (new corps de ballet dancer Ludovico Di Ubaldo) revealed through an abstract, musical response to a

recording by the Turin String Quartet of Ezio Bosso's String Quartet No 5 "Music for the Lodger" – IX-XII. The man arises, dresses and sets off on his way, interacting with sundry folk (four females and four males in an array of casual clothing) he encounters. These connections are portrayed choreographically with entangling and coiling bodies partnering in complicated and challenging duos and trios; some compassion is hinted at yet power imbalances and violence are evident. Mostly smoothly performed, this is an intriguing work.

French choreographer Claude Brumachon's engaging duo for two men, *Les Indomptés* (1992) - "The Untamed" - is set to a soaring, hypnotic recording of Belgian Wim Mertens's counter-tenor voice in "Darpa", written by Mertens. Matthew Lehmann and Jesse Homes were both outstanding, nailing the work's idiosyncratic style with precision, athleticism, strength, control and musicality in eccentric, razor-sharp, quirky movement, rapid-fire jumps, trust challenges and sustained positions.

After interval, WAB demi-soloist/choreographer Christopher Hill's elegiac *Ghost Gum*, exploring the relationship between earth and water, featured Brooke Widdison-Jacobs (Water) and Polly Hilton (Earth). Hill created and recorded the electronic sound score, devised the costumes and, in collaboration with Mercurio, designed the lighting. Beautiful movable rear screens by Gav Barbey enhance the imagery in this work. A lyrical, classically-based choreographic style emphasises dancers' silky, flowing skirts and breadth of movement,

with accomplished performances given by Widdison-Jacobs and Hilton.

The program concluded with *Milnjiya, Milky Way – River of Stars* lovingly staged and choreographed by Gary Lang to a superb recording of Henryk Górecki's sublime Symphony No 3, Op 36 "Sorrowful Songs" by West Australian Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Jon Tooby, and sung live by Deborah Cheetham in glorious voice, magnificent in a shimmering, long luminous costume, in the central role of Spirit Caller.

Lang re-tells his mother's Yolngu Milky Way creation story, and the story of the transition of spirits as they leave our realm and became part of Milnjiya ("river of stars", the Milky Way). The traditional song cycles represent the physical world and Cheetham and three NTDC dancers and eight WAB dancers represent the spirit world.

Among *Milnjiya's* strengths were the traditional cultural artists from Yirrkala – songman Banula Marika, Yidaki player Malngay Yunupingu and Bunguul dancers Ngalkanbuy Yunupingu and Loretta Yunupingu – and also Lang's eloquent, inventive movement for five men, his beautiful, poetic dance for six ladies, and a pas de six blending contemporary, classical and traditional styles.

Ochre Contemporary Dance Company and Marrugeku, amongst others, have been producing intercultural dance and telling Indigenous stories in WA for many years. It is timely that WAB dancers and audiences can share this uplifting production. ❧

– MARGARET MERCER

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The Australian Ballet's Vivienne Wong in a publicity shot for 2017's "Faster" program.

Photo: Justin Ridler.

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Let it go

Want to improve your floor work? It's all about learning to release those muscles, Alice Lee Holland tells Nina Levy, in part 3 of our series on improving your contemporary technique.

PHOTO: ASHLEY DE PRAZER

FOR classically-trained dancers, getting down and dirty (sometimes literally!) on the floor can be a challenge. After all, classical ballet is about defying rather than embracing gravity. But floor work is standard not just in contemporary dance but often in contemporary ballet as well.

So what can you do if you're struggling to make friends with the floor? Nina Levy asked Alice Lee Holland, the 2018 artistic associate for Chunky Move. Holland is a director, choreographer and dance animateur who has worked with hundreds of young Australian dancers in Safety Release Technique, most notably in Perth as artistic director of Steps Youth Dance Company (now Co3) and lecturer in dance at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

Know the floor

In order to develop a skill, it's important to understand exactly what that skill is and what it involves. So what are we talking about when we refer to floor work?

"We're talking about work lying on the floor, work across the floor and work in and out of the floor," replies Holland. "Floor work today is really diverse – there is gentle, more somatic style floor work that focuses on ease and efficiency and anatomical relationships in the body, all the way through to the really virtuosic floor work, that typical ADT-style work." If you're not sure what that last means, picture a body flying horizontally through the air to land on one knee before rolling away, or search Australian Dance Theatre (ADT) on YouTube.

"For me floor work is any movement that develops a relationship between the dancer and the floor," she continues. "You make friends with the floor so it's a kind of a softer and less aggressive playing field because the truth is that the floor is hard and you've got to learn to use it in your favour."

Hard in more ways than one

Why do classically-trained dancers sometimes struggle with floor work?

"I think the first reason is simply that it's strange and unfamiliar and, like anything new, requires practice," responds Holland. "Technically it requires a more explicit release of the muscles, which, after years of developing strength and control and power can be really confronting. You're asking people to let go. That



THIS PAGE: Ellie Chia and OPPOSITE: Michelle Aitken, both at Safety Release workshop 2015, Perth.

PHOTO: ASHLEY DE PRAZER

can be a physical challenge but it's also very much a mental challenge because you can think you're letting go and you're not. I'm fascinated by the parallels between dance training and life philosophy... that, to me, is interesting, this notion of surrender. You're not in charge... or you're in charge in a different way. Rather than being in complete control you're trying to access centrifugal force and gravity to help you move and to find this new dimension. It's a different relationship with space and gravity and the environment.

"And then, like I said, the floor is hard and unforgiving. If you don't know what you're doing or you're doing it wrong, you'll get bruises. Another reason classically trained dancers may struggle is that floor work is typically not elegant or beautiful. You can literally get dirty working on the floor. You can land up upside down, and you don't know your head from your tail. It can be disorientating."

Making friends with the floor

What can classically-trained dancers (or anyone who is struggling with floor work) do to

improve their relationship with the floor? It's about finding ways to release those muscles, says Holland. In terms of advice about how to find release, she divides it into three categories. The first is about considering new ways to approach familiar movement. The second consists of exercises or movements you can do to help you achieve release. The third is about the way you approach your training as a whole.

1. Find freedom in form

"The first thing you need to do is 'let go'... but that's easier said than done," remarks Holland. "It's about how you think about moving. Release is about thinking about your skeleton, your bones and joints, when you move, rather than the muscles. It's easy to use an example like a retire... as you're drawing the foot up the leg, consider the space in the hip socket rather than the tension in the muscles that's making the shape. The key thing is space inside the body as you move, rather than tension and holding. This isn't specific to release technique – it applies to all technique, these days.

“What you’re training in is infinite possibility and ultimate freedom of movement. So why would you rule anything out?”



Rhiana Katz, Safety Release Workshop 2018, State Theatre Centre of WA.

PHOTO: ALICE HOLLAND

It’s not just about floor work

Even if you don’t land up using your floor work skills in a professional sense, learning to release is still of enormous benefit to your dance practice.

“I reckon it would be easier to be one of those dead or dying characters, like Giselle, if you knew how to release,” says Holland with a grin.

We have a giggle but she’s not joking. “What I mean by that is that release and floor work are going to ultimately increase your dynamic range, and your ability to access a full range of qualities. It will build softness, and vulnerability and also power... a different kind of power because it’s not all about you. It’s about that relationship with space and physics.

“And then there are the physical benefits, and this is not so much about style but about a balance in technique. A lot of people are employing aspects of release in a ballet class these days. The ideas or fundamental principles of release will aid efficiency and, ultimately, your longevity and sustainability as a dancer. If you are constantly working on strength, tension and control then you’re developing imbalance in the body. You really want to find the space in the joints and the ease in movement rather than just ultimate superhero power and control over your body... which will increase the years that you can dance.

“Whatever style you’re most interested in, what you’re training in is infinite possibility and ultimate freedom of movement. So why would you rule anything out?”

“Similarly, consider that there are two types of tension: necessary tension and unnecessary tension. So when you’re dancing, what muscular engagement is necessary and what can you let go? That can be as simple as your eyebrows sometimes, or your jaw – we hold a lot of tension in our faces because we’re so focused on our bodies.

“Lastly, try a movement that is familiar with a new perspective, like the retire. Or try a jump but imagine that the pelvis is buoyant, so when you’re in the air, the legs hang from the hip sockets, so the strength is in the core, rather than the legs. It’s about finding freedom in form.”

2. Get into the groove

“Movements that use weight, falling or swinging, are really important,” says Holland. Falling off-balance is something I do a lot, especially with dancers with a lot of ballet training, just standing on your feet and letting the weight tip forward until you need to step or run to catch yourself.

“My last movement-based piece of advice is just grooving. In terms of creating infinite possibilities in the body, your dance training can’t be considered different from dancing or moving. Often we think, ‘Well I do this kind of dancing in class, and this kind of dancing when I’m just having a good time with my friends at a party.’ But they’re not different. A lot of dancers feel uncomfortable dancing socially and that’s because we don’t know how to let go. We’re concerned with all the things we associate with dance – like power, control and appearance – but actually dance is an embodiment of freedom, so remember to find the groove when you’re doing something that you think is formal.”

3. Embrace discomfort

“Balance your training,” advises Holland. “Anything that feels less comfortable, if you prefer to do ballet and contemporary feels uncomfortable, or if you do contemporary and you don’t like partner dancing, like salsa, then dive into it. There’s an important lesson in that discomfort which is ultimately going to expand your possibilities.”

Queensland Ballet Young Talent

THE Queensland Ballet is reaping the benefits of its comprehensive training programs, with four of the company's 2017 Jette Parker Young Artists – Chiara Gonzalez, Libby-Rose Niederer, Daniel Kempson and Suguru Otsuka – promoted to company artists for 2018. "They have all proved themselves to be talented, dedicated, promising and well-rounded young dancers this year with excellent technique and ability that any company would be proud to employ," artistic director Li Cunxin says.

In addition to these promotions, a group of the 2017 Jette Parker Young Artists – Hannah Clark, Paige Rochester and Shaun Curtis – will be undertaking a second year in the program. They will be joining the new 2018 artists: Josephine Frick, Natalie Lu, Lilyana Scott, Isabella Swietlicki, Pol Andres Thio, Mali Comlecki, Yue Chen Shi, Luke Dimattina and Noah Dunlop.

Cunxin says: "Luke and Natalie have come through our Qld Ballet Academy Pre-Professional Program and I'm very happy to reward their hard work and commitment, and acknowledge the outstanding job our Academy faculty is doing with our students."

Cunxin also says five male and 10 female dancers have been accepted into the company's Pre-Professional Program for 2018: Maggie Bryan, William Cheung, Lucy Christodoulou, Oscar Delbao, Talia Fidra, Renee Freeman, Holly Frick, Dani Gibson, Bronte Kielly-Coleman, Miles Lee, Rebecca Leith, Callum Mackie, Laura Ruether, Katie Shawsmith and Charlie Slater.

– MICHELLE DURSUN



Queensland Ballet Jette Parker Young Artist, Paige Rochester.

PHOTO: DAVID KELLY

SDC Pre-Professional appointees



2108 SDC PPY students.

PHOTO: PEDRO GREIG

SYDNEY Dance Company (SDC) has announced the names of students who will take part in its Pre-Professional Year (PPY) for 2018. Now in its fifth year, the 12 month intensive program provides the opportunity for students to train alongside the SDC ensemble and learn about life as a professional dancer.

Participation in the program also allows students to gain a nationally recognised qualification, the Diploma of Dance (Elite Performance), through a partnering arrangement with the Australian Teachers of Dance (ATOD). Students also gain valuable experience working with a variety of world renowned Australian and international guest choreographers.

The class of 2018 comprises: Georgia Adelt, Georgie Bailey, Alexander Borg, Nicholas Caldwell, Isaac Clark, Brielle De Thomasis, Holli Di Nardo, Eugenie English, Lillian Grant, Katya Gray, Mia Gruzin, Pia Hagberg, Charlotte Hoppe-Smith, Jacinta Janik, Austin Kelly, Brianna Leary, Gabrielle Martin, Madeline Maxwell, Bridget McAllister, Sarah McCarthy, Keia McGrady, Taylor Seymour, Brianna Shahin, Georgia Taylor, Celine Tricaricio and Taite Williams.

The course director is Linda Gamblin: "I am thrilled to welcome the Pre-Professional Year class of 2018," she says.

– MICHELLE DURSUN



Australian Ballet School graduates stretch their wings

FIVE 2017 graduates of the Australian Ballet School have been offered contracts with The Australian Ballet for 2018.

Matthew Bradwell, Daniel Bryne, Serena Graham, Emma Koppelman and Joseph Romancewicz commenced with the company earlier this year.

Another graduate, **Eilis Small**, has been offered a contract with the Birmingham Royal Ballet, and graduates **Sara Andrión** and **Indigo Robb** have been offered contracts with the The Australian Ballet – Storytime Ballets.

In addition, **Lilyana Scott, Pol Andes Thio** and **Noah Dunlop** have been offered positions in the Young Artists Program with the Queensland Ballet.

Simon Dow, artistic teacher of classical dance at the School, says: “The ABS is tremendously proud of all our 2017 graduate students as we are committed to giving them the fullest possible training and pre-

professional performance experience across all levels during their years with us.

“We are thrilled that David McAllister has recognised the abilities of five graduates and offered them contracts for this year.”

He adds, “This group has had extensive experience in performance including opportunities in Canada, China and around Australia and are wonderful, technically assured and artistically courageous representatives of the School.

“We celebrate their professional beginnings and honour our strong, committed relationship with The Australian Ballet and our continued commitment to training excellent dancers for the profession, most importantly here with our parent company and internationally”.

– MICHELLE DURSUN

(Left) Lilyana Scott.

Brisbane Challenge expands

The 2018 Brisbane Performing Arts Challenge (BPAC) will be held from May 31 to June 17 at St John’s Anglican College Auditorium and The Lighthouse Events Centre at Forest Lake in Brisbane.

This year two new scholarships have been introduced with drama and contemporary dance joining ballet, musical theatre, tap, choreography and jazz. Judges have been announced in a number of categories, including Patrice Tipoki for musical theatre scholarships and ensembles vocals; Ana Kypreos for jazz scholarships and ensembles; and Wendy Laraghy and an Australian Ballet School representative for the ballet scholarships and ensembles.

BPAC Sponsorship and Advertising Officer, Nicky Manego, is expecting a record turnout for the fast growing event with “group sections growing by 50 per cent in 2017”. The scholarships in place this year include the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) for musical theatre; Dein Perry’s Tap Dogs for tap; The Australian Ballet for the ballet scholarships and Ev and Bow for the new contemporary scholarship.

– MICHELLE DURSUN

Victorian State Ballet Pre-Professional

TEN young dancers have been accepted as the Victorian State Ballet’s Pre-Professional Artists program for 2018. The not-for-profit ballet company was founded in 2003 by Martin and Michelle Sierra and the Pre-Professional Program supports the company’s commitment to support and help develop young, talented artists. The 2018 line-up comprises **Joelle Aeby, Rebecca Murray, Lisa de Koning, Hannah Mancev, Samantha Mattner, Elise Honey, Jessica Mann, Lucy Rodwell, Amanda Christy and Anna Van Eijck.**

These students will work alongside the company members as well as take part in a career development program. They will also have the opportunity to work with some of Australia’s best choreographers. VSB is also delighted to announce that **Jayden White**, a Pre-Professional Artist from 2017, has been offered a contract with the company this year.

– MICHELLE DURSUN



Jayden White

PHOTO: KELSEY GEE



From the Grand Audition in Spain

THE third Grand Audition was held on February 6 and 7 at the Teatro-Auditori, Sant Cugat, Barcelona. Still a relatively unknown event amongst many teachers, especially those in Australia and New Zealand, it is a wonderful opportunity for students to audition for several companies at one time and in one place. It gives the dancers (aged 17 to 26 years) a chance to be seen by up to 10 directors, from both mid-size and large European companies, although American directors have also been present in the past. It is the world's first and largest international audition forum. Prospective auditionees are required to submit a DVD of a classical variation to gain entry into the audition and if successful, they pay a sizeable fee of over \$500.

I attended this event, with my daughter Alicia Townsend, after attending the Prix de Lausanne. We arrived in Sant Cugat, a rather remote town about a 30 - 40 minute drive or train ride from central Barcelona. We arrived at the theatre, on the first day, for registration and class. There were approximately 50 dancers per group and four groups throughout the day. The groups were divided according to age. After each class, the numbers of the successful candidates were announced. These students were chosen to present a classical variation the following day.

Parents and teachers were not permitted to view the first round. According to Alicia, the class was relatively straightforward but required strength and was fast moving. The candidates also had to cope with a raked stage. Places were rotated at the barre and centre work was performed on pointe. The directors were introduced to the students before the audition commenced and they sat in the audience throughout the class. A few directors had someone in attendance to represent them.

We were excited that Alicia was selected for the second round and also ex-student Isabelle Olivier, now studying at the Royal Ballet School of Flanders. Seventy finalists were chosen and seven of these were Australians. The second day commenced with registration and a warm-up class in two groups. I spoke to the charismatic founder of the Grand Audition, David Makhateli, whose vision and forward thinking has produced this wonderful event. He mentioned that he was impressed with the Australian dancers and that their applications, photos and DVDs were always very professional. Time to bring this concept to the Southern Hemisphere I think!

Students performed a variation and danced in optional costumes or leotard with a skirt or half tutu. The audience was permitted to watch this round and it was wonderful to see students from around the world present their classical variations. The standard was high and ranged from students well established professional dancers looking to change companies. The majority of students appeared to cope well with the rake.

After all the variations had been presented there was a break for the directors to deliberate. Everyone returned to the theatre and each director came on stage individually and called out the numbers of candidates of interest. Several of these candidates were offered contracts while others were interviewed by the artistic directors and possibly put on a waiting list.

Overall, the Grand Audition is a wonderful experience for many young dancers. It is well organised and I would highly recommend it to dancers who aspire to working in a ballet company.

Written by Annette Roselli, director of Annette Roselli Dance Academy in Brisbane.



Candidates gather in the theatre foyer of the Grand Audition.

WA 2018 Young Artists

THE WA Ballet has announced five Young Artist scholarships for 2018. The scholarships allow the dancers to work alongside company members and experience life as a professional dancer. They also include career planning assistance from Career Wisdom (a career advisory company).

The 2018 recipients are: **Emma-Rose Barrowclough** and **Jack Whiter**, both from the New Zealand School of Dance and Canadian National Ballet School; **Kristin Barwick** from

the WA Academy of Performing Arts; **Edward Pope** from the Old Ballet Pre-Professional Program; and **April Maguire** from the Tanya Pearson Classical Coaching Academy and Melbourne City Ballet.

– MICHELLE DURSUN



PHOTO: FRANCES ANDRILJICH

WAB Young Artists (from left): Jack Whiter, Edward Pope, Kristin Barwick, April Maguire and Emma-Rose Barrowclough.



From the Prix de Lausanne!

"The standard was exceptional – from the beautiful physiques, the students' commitment to picking up the choreography and the application of the corrections given to them – it was clear that these dancers were amongst the best in the world." ...

Did you see Annette Roselli's full article on the Prix? Go to <http://www.danceaustralia.com.au/news/from-the-prix>

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Scott Elstermann

Emerging independent dancer and choreographer Scott Elstermann is the first Australian to win a Pina Bausch Fellowship.

Where were you born?
Perth, WA.

How old were you when you started dancing? What drew you to dance?

I started dancing when I was seven years old and was immediately drawn to the music. Seeing someone move in time with a piece of music is still magical to this day.

Where did you train?

My tertiary training was at the WA Academy of Performing Arts. I completed the BA (Dance) course and was awarded the Palisade Award for the most outstanding graduate in 2014.

What dance styles have you trained in?

Before contemporary dance, I trained in jazz, tap and competitive ballroom dancing (DanceSport). I received titles such as Junior Australasian Jazz Champion and Youth Queensland Ballroom Champion along the way but contemporary dance has become my genre of choice due to its intellect and curiosity. I enjoy being stimulated both physically and mentally and find the abstract nature of contemporary dance fulfils my desire to learn, question, challenge and entertain.

What was your first professional gig?

It was a piece called *White Matter* by Shona Erskine. This work explored multiple sclerosis (MS) and its effect on two siblings. It premiered at the Blue Room Theatre in 2015 and was remounted for the 2016 MoveMe Festival. The performance skills and choreographic techniques that I learnt from this work still influence my practice today. Having the chance to be on stage with one other person for 50 minutes is a rarity as a dancer and I treasure this opportunity.

You recently made a television advert. What was that like?

I was selected to be in an ad for P&N Bank. In comparison to other dance jobs, this gig had a massive budget and everyone was there to serve you, the "talent". Everything was meticulously planned and I actually found the process very similar to a dance rehearsal. We did lots of takes



Scott Elstermann with Sam le Breton in 'The Beauty Index' by Annette Carmichael.

PHOTO: MIC DUNCAN

“Day one at Nederlands Dans Theater is also up there. It is a privilege to be let inside the building, let alone take class...”

and instead of someone saying “Let’s do that one more time” there was someone saying “action”. I had so much fun on set and have just filmed a second ad for P&N Bank, so stay tuned!

Describe your choreographic style...

I find that my choreographic style shifts slightly with each work but some common reoccurrences are intricate gestural movement, playing with rhythmic structures and text/voice.

What will you be doing on the Fellowship?

I will get to experience all the areas of Marina Mascarell’s creative process: the development of a new work, a remount of a previous work, touring

and workshops. We will travel to Sweden, The Netherlands, Spain, Germany and Italy. I will get to take class each day, observe rehearsals, participate in task work and attend performances by some of the best dance companies in the world.

What has been a highlight so far?

The introductory week in Wuppertal was a definite highlight. I got the chance to meet the other fellowship recipients, watch the Tanztheater Wuppertal company and get a rare look inside the Pina Bausch archives. Day one at Nederlands Dans Theater is also up there. It is a privilege to be let in the building yet alone take class and watch rehearsal. ☺

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