

Dear reader

This guide introduces you to a wide range of Australian contemporary dance works available for international touring.

You can find out more about the works, artists and companies on the Australia Council website, <www.ozarts.com.au>, an interactive online service promoting Australian arts and culture internationally. You'll also find touring histories, projected tours, technical specifications and contact details.

The overview essay on pages 31-33 provides an accessible introduction to the history and context of Australian contemporary dance and there's also a brief introduction on page 34 to Australian dance on film and video.

The Editors

Editors	Virginia Baxter, Keith Gallasch
Assistant Editor	Michelle Moo
Design	Peter Thorn, i2i design

Cover photographs	
Left	Bangarra Dance Theatre, <i>Bush</i> , photo Greg Barrett
Right top	Shelley Lasica, <i>History Situation</i> , photo Rohan Young
Right bottom	Gerard Van Dyck, <i>Collapsible Man</i> , photo Nat Cursio

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Australia Council
PO Box 788
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012
61 2 9215 9000 fax 61 2 9215 9111
mail@ozco.gov.au
www.ozco.gov.au

RealTime
PO Box A2246
Sydney South NSW 1235
61 2 9283 2723 fax 61 2 9283 2724
opencity@ozemail.com.au
www.realtimemarts.net

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performance

virtual dance
multimedia
dance theatre

movement
installation
performed

Introduction

Since the appearance of the first edition of this guide in 2000, Australian dance has consolidated and expanded its international presence, performing idiosyncratic and innovative works to appreciative audiences around the world.

In recent years the Australian Ballet, Sydney Dance Company, Australian Dance Theatre, Chunky Move, Bangarra Dance Theatre, Lucy Guerin and Ros Warby are just a few of the companies and artists who have enjoyed successful tours while others, like Rosalind Crisp, are developing significant collaborations with European partners.

This new edition is part of Australia Council initiatives for the long term marketing of the Australian arts, including dance, in North America, Europe and Asia with dance-specific ventures such as the Franco-Australian Contemporary Dance Exchange with Michel Caserta of la Biennale nationale de danse du Val-de-Marne. In 2002 Australian artists appeared in Caserta's program, Novembre Australien, and in 2003 the Melbourne International Arts Festival hosted a number of visiting French dance companies. The value of this exchange was enhanced by the 2003 Melbourne Festival's focus on dance, welcoming international presenters with a feast of Australian dance in the context of forums, conferences, a dedicated dance-on-film program and international masterclasses.

Diverse as it is in form and geographical distribution, the character of Australian dance reveals a continuing and deepening fascination with the body, with place, popular culture, the riches of multicultural society and the potential of new technologies. The engagement with popular culture has been invigorating, as it absorbs and reshapes the energies and dexterities of break dancing, hip hop and other forms. Readily available technology has facilitated the greater use of film and video onstage, allowing dancers to 'perform with themselves' and to inhabit magical virtual spaces. Choreographer-filmmakers are creating award-winning films for international distribution and other artists are producing multimedia dance installations, some with opportunities for audience interaction. For a form traditionally wary of anything beyond the primacy of the live dancing body, Australian dance is proving to be the most consistently adventurous of art forms.

Australian dance is also thematically rich, embracing issues of environmental deterioration, surveillance, sexuality, disability, media manipulation, racial discrimination and the plight of the refugee, and, importantly, the impact of science on the body. Equally serious and mature attention is given to formally abstract works and reflections on choreographer-dancers' lives. In all of this you are likely to encounter, to some degree, a distinctive, ironic Australian sense of humour.

Much more detail about each of the works and artists in this guide can be found on the Australia Council website, <www.ozarts.com.au>, including specifications for touring as well as contact details. *In Repertoire* celebrates the breadth and excellence of Australian dance, its capacity for innovation and cultural engagement. Some of the works presented here already have strong touring credentials, some are new—all are ready to go.

Jennifer Bott
Chief Executive Officer
Australia Council