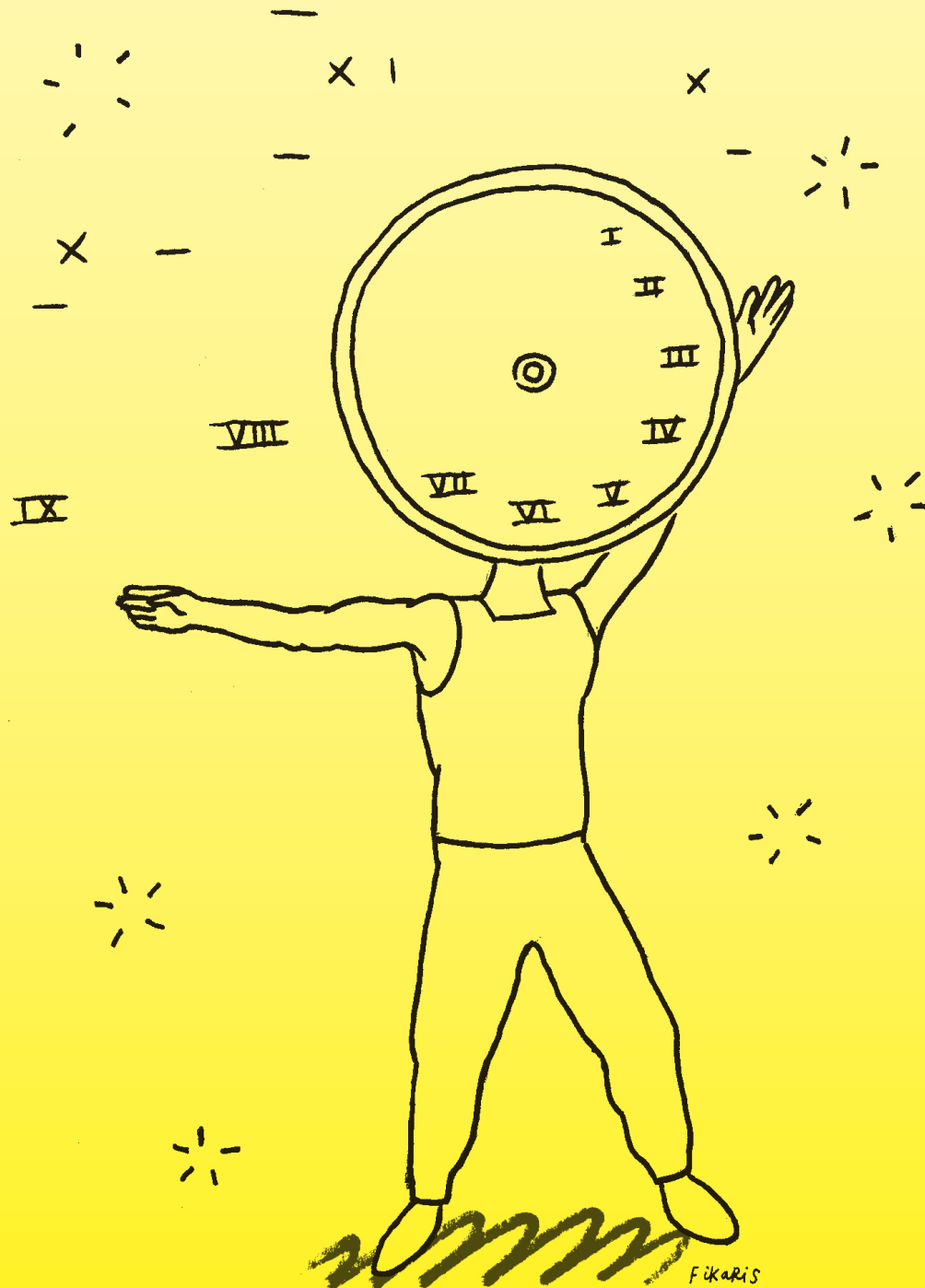


DANCEHOUSE DIARY

ISSUE 2 / JUNE – AUGUST 2012
ANNIVERSARY ISSUE – CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

- what's coming? -



DANCEHO

CONTENTS

pg 3 – 4.....	what's coming?
pg 5 – 6.....	diary entries
pg 7 – 8.....	what artists say
pg 9.....	food for thought
pg 10 – 11.....	anniversary season
pg 12 – 13.....	what's coming?
pg 14.....	also coming up at dancehouse
pg 15.....	it's all happening

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The views and opinions expressed in the Dancehouse Diary are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of Dancehouse.

Dancehouse is the centre for independent dance in Melbourne. Through its programs of residencies, performance, training and research, Dancehouse is a space for developing challenging, invigorating, and socially engaged moving art. Dancehouse aims at being a genuine tool for the dance-maker, a catalyst for developing new audiences, and a facilitator of meaningful alliances and mobility schemes, in Australia and internationally.

The Dancehouse Diary wishes to take you on an intimate journey through dance as art of thinking movement. Connected to an extended beyond of our program, it is an attempt to nourish a site for critical discourse and bring a space for sharing the dance artists' and thinkers' vision of this world with a wide readership.

EDITORIAL

what's coming?

On the eve of the organisation's 20th anniversary, it now seems hard to imagine a contemporary dance scene in Melbourne without Dancehouse. Its inception was premised on the need to support the proclivities of independent artists, even if these approaches were sometimes resistant to mainstream approval. The celebrations will include a June performance season involving 20 artists central to the Dancehouse narrative, and the launch of an anniversary website. The occasion may offer a moment of historical clarity, crystallised through the compilation of the different artists, practices, reflections, stories and representative choreographies. Will it be a point of stillness that lets us reflect on what has happened so far? Will it also create anticipation for what will unfold as Dancehouse regenerates towards a new future?

Historical assessment is difficult, as so little has been said or written about what has happened. This is as true for Dancehouse as it is for Australian dance in general. It remains a cardboard box full of collective mementoes that no one has opened in years; things have not been mulled over, the dots left unjoined, and simply put away as the next project announces itself. For dancers entering the fray now, it is difficult to get a sense of what mature artists have done or how the previous generation has influenced what they themselves now see as urgent or fresh. The scholarship or resources to engage with our dance history is limited. It is possible for us to appreciate the work of Trisha Brown without fully understanding the ways her influence has become insinuated into our comprehension through the work of Russell Dumas or Becky Hilton (via Russell Dumas and then Stephen Petronio). Dance lineages are complex and our capacity to unravel them hindered by a lack of perspective. So the fizz of the upcoming anniversary with its gathering of artists may catalyse reflection on the qualities of engagement artists have had at Dancehouse and their impact on the wider dance scene.

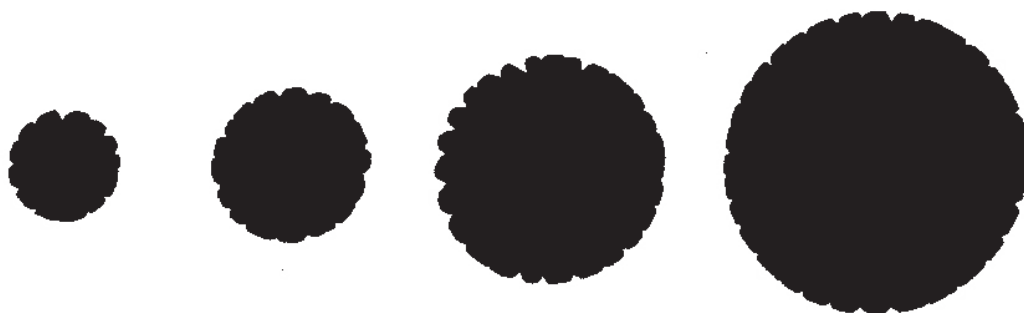
The 20th year is also a chance to reflect on Dancehouse's mission as a home for contemporary dance. The vision with which Hellen Sky, Sylvia Staehli, John McCormick and others founded Dancehouse is as insistently relevant today as it was 20 years ago. The predicament of independent dance artists continues to be fragile: limited funding spread across numerous practitioners and in a landscape in which 'innovation' reads like 'novelty' and towers above 'reiteration' or 'consolidation' in a forest of priorities. It is difficult for artists to take the time to consider, develop and consolidate what they are interested in. Dancehouse, too, is vulnerable to the changes in emphasis applied by funding bodies. Yet, it has survived not just because it has expanded its reach nationally and internationally, but also because its *raison d'être* continues to be relevant locally. Dancehouse continues to champion artists whose work does not necessarily fit comfortably into a mainstream marketing regime.

So, lets celebrate! Here's to another 20 years of detailed, gritty, thoughtful, evocative, infuriating, quiet, expansive dancing!

Shaun McLeod is a performer and improviser. He has taught dance and composition at Deakin University since 1997. He was Chair and, until very recently, a Board member of Dancehouse.

what's coming?

by philipa rothfield



the future is unknown

According to Baruch Spinoza, “we don’t know what a body can do”. Spinoza refused to separate the mind from the body (like Descartes did). For Spinoza, there is no primacy of mind over body or vice-versa. An implication of this refusal is the view that understanding does not extend beyond the body, but develops apace with it. In other words, the mind moves with the body and not independently of it. Our ignorance of the body’s potential (what a body can do) is thus an indication of our own finitude in the face of the future.

On the other hand, moving into the future offers the possibility of greater understanding. For Spinoza, a body that becomes better, more capable or more powerful expresses an improved manner of thinking. We learn from becoming more capable. And we become more capable in action, through, for example, dancing. Spinoza puts his faith in what a body does. It’s what the body does that generates greater understanding. From this point of view, of course, we don’t know what a body can do. Only time will tell. Or rather, time may tell. There is no crystal ball for us finite beings, just the sense that the body is able to take us into new places.

There is a spirit of optimism to this line of thought, in the sense that the body is capable of developing by way of its own agency or activity. Everything turns on what the body does. Spinoza puts this as a form of difference (or affect). An affect is a transitional state, it involves a shift or movement that produces difference (change) in the body. A body that becomes more capable through this transition is said to experience an increase of power. This is something that happens in action. Power in this context is not power over

others, rather it’s about the extent to which a body exercises and therefore manifests its inherent potential. The greater the power a body exhibits, the more it expresses its unique and singular essence. Increasing capacity is not about becoming better than others but about becoming better in relation to oneself. This happens in action, at the level of what a body does. This changes all the time, since power is not something to hold onto—it’s pure manifestation. In other words, it’s all in the dancing. For example, Ramsay Burt describes a moment in an early contact improvisation piece, called *Magnesium* (dir. Steve Paxton, 1972). During the course of the piece, one performer (Curt Siddall) apparently dropped another (Nancy Stark Smith). According to Burt, instead of trying to take responsibility for a ‘mistake’, Siddall allowed the body of the other to deal with the encounter, to find a safe way to roll onto and over the ground. This happened quickly. Burt argues that the performer’s getting out of the way enabled the bodies involved to respond in the moment and to take the lead. In other words, Siddall did not try to consciously ‘fix’ the situation. Rather, he allowed Stark Smith to negotiate her own body’s dynamic response. Stark Smith in turn let her body respond. Burt speaks of the body’s “relatively autonomous motor actions” as something beyond conscious control. He draws on the distinction between the dancer’s subjectivity (as conscious control) and the body’s skilful expression, arguing that the latter came into play through this encounter. We might say that, for Burt, the body which rolls out of the fall becomes more capable in virtue of the encounter.



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No-one knew what was going to happen. Things looked bad for a moment but the body drew on its own skill to become something more in the moment. Contact Improvisation is full of these felicitous moments, encounters that generate surprising results. When it works, it can also produce surprising results, well beyond the preconceptions of the performer. According to Kim Sargent-Wishart, the trick is to open oneself up to that space of possibility in performance. Deleuze sees this as a devaluation of consciousness in favour of thought (in the body). In other words, “we” are ignorant, but the body keeps moving, keeps changing:

One seeks to acquire a knowledge of the powers of the body in order to discover, in a parallel fashion, the powers of the mind that elude consciousness... (Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*, p.18)

There's a look I've seen on a few faces recently, where the performer was in the dark, yet poised to go on. One was on Fiona Bryant's visage as she performed a solo in Deborah Hay's *In the Dark* (Dancehouse, June 2010), the other was Ros Crisp (Dancehouse, March 2011). In both cases, the performer's not-knowing made space for the body's subsequent articulation. To have ‘known’ what was to come would have imposed an artificial constraint on the action. To return to Spinoza, in these examples, the dancer modulated something in herself at the edge of movement, at the abyss. Nancy Stark Smith writes:

“Where you are when you don't know where you are is one of the most precious spots offered by improvisation. It is a place from which more directions are possible than anywhere else. I call this place the Gap. The more I improvise, the more I'm convinced that it is through the medium of these gaps—this momentary suspension of reference point—that comes the unexpected and much sought after “original” material. It's “original” because its origin is the current moment and because it comes from outside our usual frame of reference.” Nancy Stark Smith (p.3)

According to Stark Smith, the dancer must give up his/her usual anchors in order to make space for new material. This is difficult for the trained dancer. In *Dancehouse Diary #1*, Russell Dumas wrote about a process he calls ‘slow rendering’. Like the *Gap* in Stark Smith's work, ‘slow rendering’ does not depend upon the dancer's knowing what to do. In these instances, it's the body that takes the lead, so that development occurs ‘behind your back’. For Dumas, consciousness stands in the way of corporeal development, and must be strategically redeployed (employed) while the body learns. The suggestion is that, given the right conditions, it's the body that learns. In Trisha Brown's *Accumulation with Talking plus Watermotor* (1978), Brown speaks while performing a complex series of actions. Within the work itself, she claims that when she started talking in performance, she couldn't keep track of her dancing while talking and vice-versa. There is a sense in which the body takes over, that we cannot keep track. According to Sarah Rudner: “When it came right down to it, and you were there to do the dance, the best thing that happened was the body took over and the dance happened”.

So, while ‘we’ may not know what a body can do, we can nonetheless seek the body as that which will lead us into the future.

the future is past

What happens when the body takes over? That's a tricky question which depends on so many factors—training, technique, facility, history, socio-economic milieu, performance habitus and kinaesthetic context. Elizabeth Grosz writes of ‘habit-memory’ in Bergson's work. A great deal of dance training could be seen as the production of habit-memory in the body. The ballet dancer's daily barre cultivates habit memory through the repetition of its familiar lexicon. But many other practices equally operate through the production of habitual preferences, images and qualities. There is pleasure in repetition of the familiar, in the feel of facility. How much energy do we put into cultivating and reproducing our corporeal habits? Consider the rituals of warming up, all those favoured moves, physical sensations, preferred stretches and rhythms. I was watching a season of *The Dance Card* at Dancehouse one year. Its participants were to improvise, along with changing music and lighting states. It became apparent to me how dancers tended to fall into patterns of movement, modes of physical organisation and rhythms that counted as dancing for that particular person. One dancer performed a kind of phrase material along the length of the room. It looked like class. Another bounced up and down in quick succession, slipping into a recognizable rhythmic expenditure of energy. In these moments, each performer fell into what felt to them like dancing. Those feelings clearly came from prior experiences, dispositions and tendencies. There is a sense in which kinaesthetic taste is also a child of the past. I was speaking with one of Melbourne's improvisers, who said that he likes to watch people make decisions in the moment, to see how they deal with the challenges and possibilities of improvisation. This is an acquired taste, like the taste for a good red wine.

The current socio-political milieu, the cost and availability of space, funding models and their embedded norms also condition what follows. Dumas speaks of the (im)possibility of a future dance practice in relation to the conditions of today. And yet, he makes work in the interstices of today and tomorrow—*dance for the time being*. Dumas knows that dance exists in the passing moment. Nothing to hold onto, yet plenty to do. Camus has another take on the Greek myth of Sisyphus, the Greek hero condemned by the gods to roll a boulder up a hill only to watch it roll down again. Sisyphus is condemned to repeatedly roll that boulder uphill. Camus argues that we must imagine Sisyphus happy in that moment between rolling the boulder up the hill and watching it inevitably roll down again. This is the existentialist hero embracing the absurdity of human existence, finding a way to go on. What about the boulder? How does it feel being rolled up and rolling down? Is its future set? Maybe it will do something else next time.

diary entries

WHAT'S COMING?
DIARY ENTRIES

ame henderson

Futuring is the practice of guessing together what might be about to happen. How can we arrive in the moment right after now, all together, without knowing where we're going next? Without leading or following, and therefore without abandoning either individual perception or desire to be with others, we try to move into the next moment, as one. A speculative project that manifests as faltering, hilarious and hopeful micro-heroics.

coming events cast a shadow prue crome

From the pattern of things past to predict what's coming, my thoughts sit with the notions of always needing to connect to tangible experiences, particularly given the context of computer driven virtual space and market determined evaluations that are all encompassing at the moment.

We already have a virtual space in our brains which we can choose to exercise at any moment of the day or night, yet the moments of sheer pleasurable transformation occur daily and are completely free. Such as: marvelling at an exquisite sunrise or sunset, the expectation of stormy clouds, joyous new plant growth, the taste and smell of freshly picked fruit and vegetables, spectacularly coloured bird plumage, the warm touch of friendship and love, tingling bubble of a funny moment, the exquisite feel of a handmade object... all the multitude of experiences that are part of the everyday that stimulate all our senses and place use within the universe, on this planet, in this time and space.

christophe martin

This question, which does require some degree of prospection, inventiveness and reflection, leads us to reflect on the place dance holds within our society. In some 20, 30 or 50 years, will we still dance? No doubt about that. Of course! But on what occasions? With whom? Why? This will depend on the artistic challenges of the project. Will we dance for the audience? Naturally! Will the audience be there, physically present? We'll see. Will the dancers themselves be there? We'll see. With a similar body to ours? We'll see. Prosthesis, implants, robotics, computer generated images, avatars of all sorts, all these will be potential new ways of mirroring the body. Just as we can imagine incredible new designs and relationships to space and time. And will we have to be sexually defined for dancing? Does all this radically alter what is so fundamental to dance?

The sophisticated tension generated by these diverse elements combined and which generates a non-verbal, yet meaningful discourse, has never been more at ease with the Other, the new. Can the need to create be diluted in time? I hardly think so. In its broader definition, dance requires nothing to exist. Dance is not doomed to incarnate itself, it can grow in the stars or in the mind. Neurons dance. Stars, as well. And this is precisely what all the anxious, the cowards, the reticent and the politicians fear above all: complete freedom, and therefore absolute frailty of this art form which stands no polish and at times offers the quintessence of intelligence. Everything is still to be danced. Eternity will probably not suffice.

Eternity

ian woxvold

$$F = N + \Delta t$$

Note that modern physicists consider t to be non-linear such that all events occur simultaneously. The difference between any two moments can thus be expressed as: $t_i + 1 - t_i = 0$

Therefore, $\Delta t = 0$ and: $F = N$

The theme of this issue was inspired by Alexandra Harrison's project that she is currently developing at Dancehouse within her Housemate Residency. Her What's Coming? will be a future's festival, a sort of prophecy for the future of dance. Alexandra asked fellow artists to write a few lines on what they thought would come. We have included here some of those contributions and we also approached some other dance artists or writers. This is what they think is coming for dance and the world in general...



Ame Henderson is a Canadian choreographer based in Toronto. She is currently working on relay, an experiment about the politics and possibility of being together. publicrecordings.org

Prue Crome is a Melbourne-based installation artist who creates immersive light and colour works.

Christophe Martin is the director of Faits d'Hiver Festival and of micandases in Paris and a dance writer. micandases.fr

Dr Iain Woxvold is a Melbourne-based ornithologist and sleepy musician.



Debra Batton is the submerging performer and director of Big on the Inside productions.

David Corbet performed in his first ever dance piece at Dancehouse in 1996. Since then, he has performed with many, and still with Jacob Lehrer, when not held ransom to the demands of a junior doctors timetable.

Photos by Nadia Mercuri,
Melbourne-based visual artist

debra batton today was a sad day

We (Bev, Denise and I) took mum to her new 'home'. She was sad, confused, a little bit annoyed and very uncertain, like today was the first she knew of this arrangement. She cried at first, and then put on a brave face, not because she colludes, but because she does not want to cause her daughters any trouble. We hugged and tried to make space for her sadness. We said good bye to her unit in Ringwood; there was a big pink rose in the garden and the white roses looked lovely.

I cried, but not in front of her, or any of the other ladies (a few men) who sat waiting, chatting, waiting, sleeping, waiting.

I bought pink and orange gerberas and had her white chest of drawers in the boot of my car, the TV on the back seat. Bev had her suitcases and some framed photos, Denise transported mum.

We washed our hands with disinfectant, we were welcomed, we set up her room attempting to make the small space feel like it belonged to her. We filled in forms, deciding no to medical intervention to keep her alive, and ensured her choice to donate her organs was clear.

I remain sad this evening, I don't think I like what's coming.

david corbet

What's coming? The next big thing. The hot new choreographer. The innovative, controversial, challenging, successful, populist, demanding, emerging, unique, inspiring, persistent, ingratiating, self-aggrandising, well networked, talented, deserving, award-winning, funded, internationally recognized, nationally celebrated, locally demanded, undeserving, fashionable, critically lauded, constantly supported, young/old dance genius.

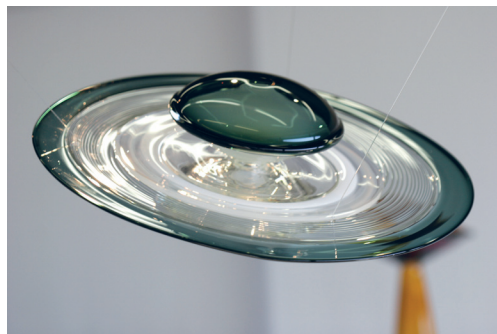
We all know this.

But the exciting thing about *What's coming?* is in the realm of the hidden, the unknown, the unforeseen.

And what matters then, is practice.

Doing. And doing. And doing.

Because in some ways, making dance is like digging a hole. It requires thought and action, and offers limitless possibilities - depth, size, shape, purpose, contents, substance. And, to paraphrase Jacob Lehrer, at the end, it is obvious whether or not you have dug the hole, whether or not you have done the necessary work. There's a transformative power in hard yakka. There's no time to think about what's coming when you're busy digging. And, after you hit gold and the celebrations are over, you just have to keep digging.



Imagination

by Simon Ellis

•the past is never dead. it's not even past. •

— William Faulkner

This writing is a clutch bag of ideas. I'm in the middle of a dense creative development period and predictably the things that seem important to me now reflect the questions and problems my collaborator – Colin Poole (www.colinsimonandi.com, don't want to miss a chance to advertise) – and I are currently facing. I can imagine a terrible future in which the beautiful weight of work might not interfere, colour and crash into my understanding and experiences.

When first taught the Warrior pose in yoga, I was advised, "Not too far in the future, and not too far in the past". I imagine the practice of performance and choreography to involve a similar balance between an understanding and awareness of the past (both recent and distant) and an occasional glance at the horizon. But this balance is skewed or complicated by a personal interest in research, and in this word is built a curiosity about the search (and re-search) for newness.

Here is a list of questions. They can be thought of as being for you the (future) reader, or for me, as I attempt to construct these thoughts now, on a grey London spring morning:

How do our interests and ways of participating in the world contribute to contemporary culture?

How do you respond as you become aware of trends in dance and performance? Do you embrace them or react by being other?

What is your relationship with originality?

What do you believe in?

What do the edges of contemporary dance practice look and feel like? What about the middle?

I have two interests at the moment that seem relevant to what's coming. The first is quite contemporary, and the other is more personal and perhaps is informed by the work I have seen in Europe these last 6 years.

assessing information

Educator Dwayne Harapnuik has suggested that "the greatest challenge of our current, digital information age is assessing, not accessing information" (in Bruff, 2011). If I choose to turn and face the full stream of data and information that is assaulting us all, how am I to decide which of these data to

hold on to? Or what if I imagine that I can escape this torrent of links, sharing, blogging, re-blogging, opinion, guff, and status updates?

Whether we like it or not, we are participating in an economy of information, and I believe that bringing an informed presence to how I participate (willfully or not) in our dizzying circulation of images, texts and videos is a vital aspect of how I make and present art.

Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek's various criticisms of Western Buddhism – by which he vaguely means some concatenation of Eastern systems of thought – is that meditative practices enable us to "fully participate in the frantic pace of the capitalist game while sustaining the perception that [we] are not really in it" (Žižek, 2001). The temptation to withdraw is overwhelming; to "uncouple" and become indifferent to the "mad dance of accelerated process" (Žižek, 2001).

What are the implications of these socio-politics for us as artists and choreographers?

Žižek's challenge is enormous to the point of impossible. How are we to question and find alternatives to the cynical spirit of our time whilst acknowledging that we are utterly responsible for creating and participating in an economy of (data) consumption (as I write this on an Apple Mac, using 'free' software, listening to illegally downloaded music on headphones bought using Arts Victoria funding for a project called *Inert*)?

Am I simply passing on experience or things that I stumble upon? How does my choreographic work intervene in these data streams? How do I frame these experiences and question what is being seen, heard, and felt? Can I participate in this economy knowingly whilst presenting work in which how audiences respond generates complex problems and rich imaginative spaces for both them and me?

These questions seem to represent a repackaging of Brecht's epic theatre, but what is different is the (enormous) quantity and (shoddy) quality of how we are informed – and inform ourselves – as participants. But does this difference make any difference?



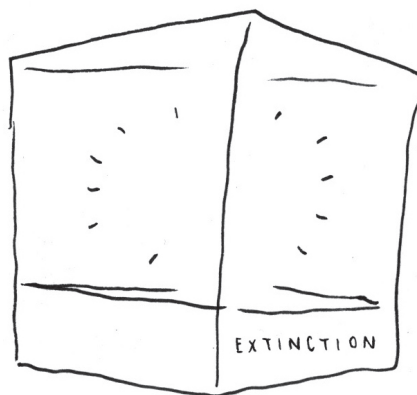
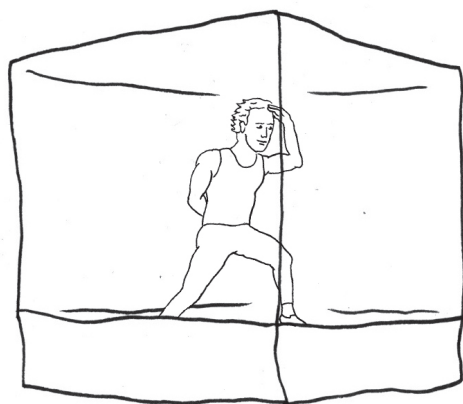
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mess, flaws & breakage

"Maybe there's gonna be something with interfaces being actually broken in some way—broken to mimic real life, not broken because we're bad at developing things." — Marcin Wichary, Senior User Experience Designer at Google.

I'm interested in making choreographies that provoke and give space for the imaginations of audiences. In part, this is because I am not sure I have anything to 'say' as a maker, but also because I acknowledge the tremendous intelligence of audiences in contemporary performance. My biases as an artist push me towards developing work in which I have deeply considered the various permutations of dramaturgy, influence, and contemporaneity. This has resulted in work that tends to get described as "intelligent" or perhaps "beautifully intelligent" (if I'm lucky). More recently I've started wondering, what if I break how I make work? What about failure? What happens if I start to drop some of the balls of meaning or influence? Where are the flaws and what if they don't need editing? What if I shut up? What does a mess look and feel like? What are the boundaries of formality in performance?

Coupled with this is my sense that I am becoming less interested in dictating the terms of experiences for both audiences and performers. How light might my touch be as a choreographer? How little is required in order for an audience to be involved in merely the smallest of transformations?

But is this what's coming?

No.

However, the decisions I will make, and the curiosities I will follow are never independent. I am not an independent artist. These decisions and curiosities are part of a complex set of interactions — between culture, individuals, politics and economics — that demand we test our ideas and practices outside the bubble of the art world; that we grapple with difficult questions of power and technology, and that we might risk providing the space to welcome the imaginations of those who watch performance.

Finally, I don't quite know how to fit this in, but there is an article in *Wired* magazine (http://www.wired.com/epicenter/2012/04/ff_spotfuture_qas/all/1) that asks several "visionaries" how they spot the future. This is a selection of my favourites and least favourites:

Paul Saffo: "I look for: contradictions, inversions, oddities, and coincidences".

Esther Dyson: "The first thing I do is go where other people aren't".

Juan Enriquez: "A clear view of the future is often obstructed by taking too much for granted".

Tim O'Reilly: "I find the cool kids and then say, what are they doing?"

Chris Sacca: "I walk around Best Buy every three to four weeks and watch people."

Joi Ito: "I believe in serendipity, and in the strength of weak ties".

Peter Schwartz: "You look for technologies that are likely to create major inflection points—breaks in a trend, things that are going to accelerate".



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a commitment to the arts

by esther anatolitis

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The independent arts in Victoria are dynamic, thriving, inspiring. Yet while countless new works are presented by the week, countless more will never be experienced, critiqued or toured beyond their immediate circle. Government partnerships with arts organisations are the only way to create a commitment – a strategic, long-term commitment – to vital, invigorating art that enriches us all.

Right now, two major partnership sources are under review: Arts Victoria's Organisations Program, which supports some 70 of the state's 7,800+ small-to-medium arts organisations, and the Australia Council, which is under independent review alongside the National Cultural Policy development. With the third major local investor, the City of Melbourne, having undergone this process last year and realigned its arts investments with its strategic priorities, it's clear just how important arts partnerships are for every level of government.

Community development, education and skills, design, cultural diversity, planning, tourism, employment, health – government objectives in all these areas are achieved by arts organisations. In turn, arts organisations drive innovation across all these policy areas: art makes new connections, new exchanges, new thinking possible. Substantial corporate and philanthropic partnerships support specific works, but only government investment builds the long-term capacities of the entire creative industry.

For Arts Victoria, the Organisations Program review – the first in its thirty-year history – is about opening it up to new companies. While all companies submit intensely competitive proposals every three years, most have achieved funding recurrently across many years, making it difficult for new organisations to match their strong track records. Yet if current investment levels are maintained, how can we achieve this?

In nobody's imagining is Victoria a place that sets artificial limits on creativity, that sets out to constrain innovation at a peak time. Nor has this ever been the Australian imagining. Also under review is the Australia Council, which – partly for political reasons predating its existence – funds a disproportionate balance of organisations and artforms, with overall funding increases never having arrived to redress the imbalance in a meaningful way. The Australia Council review has recently accepted public submissions, and Arts Victoria have released a public survey and a discussion paper via their website. They'd love to hear your thoughts. The new National Cultural Policy is expected to take a comprehensive view for positive change at the national level – but in each case, more than just policy will be needed.

Arts funding takes an ambitious approach to pushing the limits of our creativity. The only way to open up successful organisations programs is to increase the total government investment. This is a necessary first step to investing meaningfully and strategically into our complex open system and fostering its evolution.

Let's extend that thinking further. Creative organisations command creative approaches to partnerships – this is why more and more corporates partner with the arts. Beyond

government funding increases, what next steps can transform the investment model?

Let's see our government partner with organisations on marketing the independent arts at blockbuster scales. Beyond 'hidden secret' laneways and 'major event' spaces, let's tell intricate, confident stories about the people, works and places that make this the state of the arts.

Let's imagine partnerships based on a targeted stimulus approach, where organisations can harness the expertise of government in modelling ambitious expansion plans, accessing economic impact tools, or targeting artistic projects to regional renewal priorities. Youth literature companies could access Department of Education expertise to develop more relevant schools programs, with additional funds to support the organisation's expansion. Small galleries could access Treasury expertise to assess their economic impact, using the results to build sustainable partnerships with local businesses, with stimulus funds to support that intensive work. Places Victoria could collaborate with organisations creating durational site-specific works as opposed to one-off pieces of public sculpture, with additional stimulus funding the new approach. Such short-term intensives yield dazzling long-term results as new audiences, partners and ideas are developed.

So if the arts in Victoria are thriving, couldn't government investment just remain static, or even shrink? No government invests in an industry with a view to overseeing its contraction, yet that's what this would mean for our prolific ecosystem. It's taken thirty years to build what we have today – thirty years of negotiating that fine balance between government, private, and self-generated income; thirty years of nurturing the development of individual artists and the independent arts sector as a complex whole; thirty years of extending our government partnerships into a commitment to advancing the public good. Any shift in investment will have significant multiplier effects on Victoria's triple bottom line.

Government partnerships with arts organisations do much more than providing a base level of operational funding. They create invaluable commitments from agile, engaged, expert organisations to work well beyond their artistic scope in building this great state of the arts. Of course, it's a complex construction, and always a work in progress. Today, however, we're a far cry from the 1982 environment that founded Melbourne Fringe "on the fringe of nothing," in the auspicious words of one of its founders, Sue McCauley. By 1992 when Dancehouse was formed, Arts Victoria's Organisations Program was already starting to feel the pressure from growing numbers of newly formed, impactful independent arts organisations. Our state of the arts has far to go.

The most valuable legacy that Arts Minister Ted Baillieu can create is to expand Arts Victoria's Organisations Program with new funds, new ideas, new possibilities. Now is the ideal time to make a confident investment in Victoria's creative future, ensuring our artists ignite Australia and our ideas lead the world.



Writer and arts advocate Esther Anatolitis is CEO of Melbourne Fringe and co-curator of Architecture+Philosophy. A version of this article was published on 19 March 2012 in *The Age* as *Government and independent arts must nurture an open marriage*.

alive!

anniversary project 20 years – 20 choreographers

JUNE 20-22, 2012 6PM-10PM
with intervals and drinks

Dancehouse is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. Its history is first and foremost about people, the independent dance community, which has built and contributed to its longevity. We have invited 20 choreographers who worked and presented their work at Dancehouse during the past 20 years to remount up to 10 min. of a previous piece. This 'exercise' is a study on the ephemerality of dance, on the body memory and how passage of time affects and afflicts it, on the potential of dance to re-inhabit changing bodies and generate new meaning with old content. Further more, it is a broader reflection on what the contemporary body means and how it makes sense in our actual society.

**WITH: Born in a Taxi, Deanne Butterworth, Alice Cummins, Nat Cursio,
Russell Dumas, Janice Florence, Luke Hockley, Christos Linou, Jo Lloyd, Shaun McLeod, Tracie Mitchell,
Sandra Parker, Michaela Pegum, Dianne Reid, Phoebe Robinson, Paul Romano, Hellen Sky,
Sally Smith, Peter Trotman, Tony Yap.**



what's coming?

by sally gardner

Dancehouse is turning twenty. Its longevity is a tribute to the founding vision of Hellen Sky and Sylvia Staehli and to the many others who have contributed ever since. For this anniversary I have been invited to write something under the heading 'What's coming?'. I'm including the question mark, humbled by the thought that someone may have felt that I could speak for 'the dance of the future', as Isadora Duncan put it.

'What's coming?' is an interesting question to place beside the idea of the contemporary and of contemporary dance. The juxtaposition raises the question of how we imagine time and the relations amongst past, present and future. In linear time, for example, we are propelled forward, horizontally, apparently leaving the past behind. In archaeological time, eras pile up vertically, and the past bleeds upward from below into the present and future. We can also dig it up and bring pieces of it into the space of now. In cyclical time, there are continual returns where things get created, destroyed and then re-appear - but transformed. Yet another kind of time is the one that is lived or experienced: a durational, elastic time which can seem to speed up or slow down - very much a dancer's felt sense of time. We might have different conceptions of the contemporary, of contemporary dance, and of Dancehouse's role depending on which of these times is or are involved.

Dance participates in the 'of now' and does this very well. Being an art, of time and change, it need not be weighed down by permanence and tradition. But stopping with the idea of weight for a moment, this is one of dance's - certainly modern dance's - most defining attributes. According to Ann Daly and others, what Duncan did with her approach to dancing that was new at the time was to enable an audience to feel her shifts of weight in their own bodies. What's coming I hope will include dance that investigates, as it has done in the past, a poetics of human weightedness. This weightedness does not easily translate into other contemporary media or on to screens: it is particular to the live - a state which is apparently ethereal through time, but materially weighted.

In 1957, when I was turning four, Hannah Arendt wrote about the first spaceship that was put into orbit around the earth. She reflected that 'it dwelt and moved in the proximity of the heavenly bodies as though it had been admitted tentatively to their sublime company'. But she was also taken aback by the response of American journalists at the time whose reaction was relief that: 'the first step toward escape from men's imprisonment to the earth' had finally been taken. Arendt was amazed and appalled that our gravity-bound earthliness could be regarded as a prison. Ten years earlier, Doris Humphrey made a work called 'Day on Earth', showing that modern dance was often ahead of its time.

I have the privilege of working on a daily basis with students in their early twenties, some of whom aspire to make their lives in dance. This privilege also feels like a big responsibility as I know that their training, what informs their bodies now, will at least in part shape what's coming as they move into the future. At the same time, I despair of national arts policy and arts funding which has failed them badly. Hence, the importance of Dancehouse which, I imagine, will not continue to exist only at 150 Princes St, North Carlton but will keep extending itself virtually and concretely towards many other real and imaginary venues and points of connecting.

Dancehouse: a becoming in space and time.



Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago & London: Chicago UP, 1958.

Daly, Ann. *Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1995.

Duncan, Isadora. *The Dance of the Future in The art of the dance* edited and with an introduction by Sheldon Cheney. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1970 (originally published in 1928)



Sally Gardner

Sally has been a lecturer in dance at Deakin University since 2005. She has been an occasional dancer with Dance Exchange and was a founding member of Danceworks. She is a co-editor of *Writings on Dance journal* and has published articles in numerous dance and other humanities forums.

We asked Alexandra Harrison what she thought was coming. An intimate conversation with Angela Conquet, artistic director of Dancehouse.

Drawing by Hanna Pärssinen, a Finnish visual artist, puppetry and theatre designer based in Hobart. She studied music theory briefly at the age of 7.

what's coming

prophecies

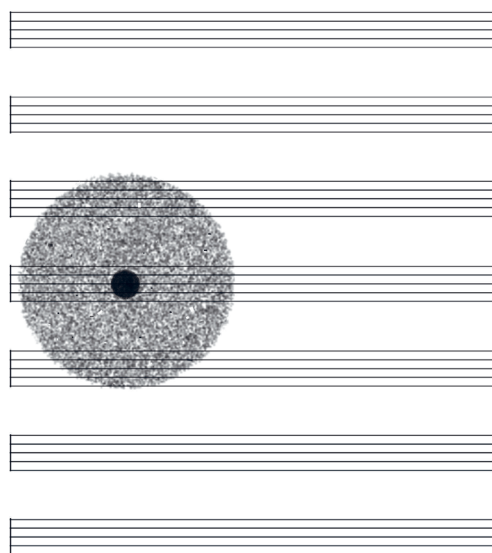
by alexandra harrison

So, how did you get so interested by what's coming?

What's coming began in 2009 as a conversation I had with an 84 year old woman called Daphne Kingston. I was sitting in Daphne's kitchen, drinking tea and eating biscuits, and she was telling me about her 35 year long practice of documenting architecture in the Sydney basin; old jerry built slab huts, farm houses, barns and fences. She would return to properties, year after year, and draw them in their various states of disrepair, renovation, demolition. Prior to this, she had been a visual artist but she shifted her practice as she became disillusioned around the 60s and 70s by the commodification of art. I asked if this commodification was something she could articulate at the time, or was it something she perceived only in hindsight. Oh no no no, she said, I knew it at the time. Coming events cast their shadows, you know. Coming events cast their shadows. I was struck by this. Do they? Do coming events cast their shadows? And I got to thinking that older folk must get good at reading shadows and it is a practice I am just beginning. I began to wonder about the conditions of the present and the future movements they would become/produce. *What's Coming* and its prophetic concerns quickly became a playful articulation of the serious business of paying attention.

If it were true that our world is reflected in the dancing body, how do you imagine our bodies will move in, say, 30-40 years? How do you see people moving on the street and on the stage? Will there be a stage, by the way, or will we shift totally into some sort of virtual world?

Things will continue
The future will be continuous
The street will continue to be a forest of gesture
and the street will also be a programmatic space
safety and health and elimination of risk will continue
movement will continue to be optimised for efficiency
movement will continue to follow the cues of briefs and instruction
Perhaps this is where the robot is located - in the articulation of mechanical procedure in human flesh,
and communication becomes exchange of discrete information based on a handbook of directives
think of call centres/outourcing/motivational speak/
obfuscated political speak
and disaster will continue
But the future will be funny too - for in this deadpan of



repetition, and even in the deficit of understanding, is a comic situation.
And then, too, is the inescapable animal
so there will be mess
and aberration and unpredictability
these things will continue too
and alarms will continue to sound but they won't all be heard
some things will continue to be over-exposed
and things will continue to disappear
- including stages
but stages will also continue to be everywhere
I think
so dance, too, must fall into neglect and sag (and become beautiful) with age and become dilapidated grown over
and be demolished and be repaired and renovated and rebuilt
dance too will disappear and continue

Are you afraid of what's coming?

there is a great moment in a Ben Okri novel where a man sees a heron
the heron stands simple and still in a swamp and the man sees it
and the humble, muted heron seems to grow in majesty in his sight
and then something catches his eye
it is a marvellous spectacle appearing over the horizon
it is all colour and noise and light
it is brass bands and whistles
and it approaches and the man can't take his eyes off it
and it expands in its magnitude through his watching
and as he watches he realizes the heron is receding
the heron is fading next to the elaborating spectacle until it altogether disappears.

I am afraid for the vanishing heron.

and I fear demolition too. It's scary.
but onward.

It is said that we shape the world each time we look at it, which means the world is a mere resemblance of ourselves. And W. Whitman was worried that there were so many promises to keep and miles to go before we sleep. Can what's coming become better because we can make it better, now, each day, every day, for the future? Because this is probably the power, the only, genuine one, that we have? To make what's coming better than we expect it?

Yes, exactly - well, not necessarily that it resembles us but that it resembles the limits/expanses of our seeing that is why it is so important what we pay attention to and why constant gliding over seductive surfaces represents a limit to the future.

sometimes I worry about dance's seductive surface, but Walt Whitman's worry is a beautiful one - maybe I should make that my worry.

expectations are tricky
sometimes I have been very happy without expectations and sometimes they set out a useful and keen map for the future.

Theoretically, I have questions about improvement - Andrew Benjamin at a SEAM conference a few years ago proposed that utopias were fascist because they were pre-determined ideals that reality then had to shape itself to.

if you mean by "making better" a responsive dialogue with the present not based on a model of perfection then, yes, absolutely we can make what's coming better and what's more it is desirable.

And the pursuit of happiness in what's coming?...

Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* starts with a title card proclaiming something to the effect of a story of industry, individual enterprise and crusading in the pursuit of happiness.

I am not averse to happiness as such, but it does seem that happiness is a bit of a project of modernity - wed with the ideology of progress and the dogma of improvement.

I wonder about joy - that bubbling vivid sensation connected to anticipation and the present and physicality. Or a happiness more synonymous with gratitude and appreciation, responsibility and wisdom.

Or what about a happiness that is collaborative? What if we expand the singularity of the individual enterprise and make happiness a collaborative/collective experience? That could be more a something.

But pursuing any future does seem a little strange if you think about the physicist's idea that the past exists in particles and the future comes in waves. You don't really need to pursue a wave - you just need to position yourself and then wait... (patience?)

What's coming?

A Future's Festival
by Alexandra Harrison
July 31 - Aug 4 / 7pm

Alexandra Harrison is our current Housemate program artist-in-residence. She has been engaged in the creation and performance of dance and theatre for the last thirteen years. She has been an ensemble member with *Legs on the Wall* with whom she has created, performed and toured nationally and internationally. She performed in and devised Nigel Jamieson's award-winning *Honour Bound*, Branch Nebula's *Paradise City* and in 2010 she created her first full-length solo work *Dark, Not Too Dark*. She recently moved to Melbourne where she likes to indulge in prophesying on the future of dance.

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dancehouse winter intensive / anniversary edition

Our Winter Intensive features workshops led by a collection of accomplished artists and movement practitioners who have had a strong and influential connection with Dancehouse over our 20 Year History. Come along and immerse yourself in a range of physical experiences. Teachers include Jane Refshauge, Shelley Lasica, Wendy Smith and Tracie Mitchell.

June 25 - July 6

body weather & butoh training intensive tess de quincey

This workshop will provide an immersion in BODY WEATHER principles alongside elements of BUTOH training. Body Weather is the basis of Tess de Quincey's performance practice and underlies the work of her Sydney-based performance company De Quincey Co.

July 13 - 15
Friday 6pm - 9pm
Saturday & Sunday 10am - 5pm

mythbusting posture & movement r. buono & c. thomas

This interactive lecture is a fascinating exploration of the mystery of human movement. Drawing on common sense ideas and everyday situations, Alexander Technique practitioners Rossella Buono and Carina Thomas will lead a fun and informative 2hr session guaranteed to change the way we see our bodies.

Choose from Wednesday 27 June or Monday 20 August
7pm-9pm at Dancehouse

OTHER

call out for your way!

Dancehouse is interested to hear from professional contemporary dance artists who would like to present a short work, within a mixed-bill, at Dancehouse as part of a three night season during the Melbourne Fringe Festival in October 2012. We will attempt to program as many works as we can according to our technical, logistical and spatial capacities. Dancehouse will provide performance venue, publicity, basic technical support, ticketing and box office. Appropriate works are those up to 25 minutes long, with very light technical needs and with a strong focus on rigorous choreographic investigation. It is possible that we may be able to accommodate both new and finished works, however the artists will be responsible for producing the work in the lead up to the performance.

Contact natalie@dancehouse.com.au for further details

invitation to contribute to the diary

If you like our Diary and you would like to contribute to it with articles, drawings or any wild idea that will make it be or look better, feel free to send your material to angela@dancehouse.com.au.

Any feedback will of course be highly appreciated.

green room

Our Green room has been completely revamped by our favourite illustrator MP. Fikaris. Lively colours, dancing bodies, and discreet references to some Dancehouse people – it all goes perfectly well with the still green backyard. We will soon bring in the books, ours, and some from Ausdance (who have kindly accepted to place them in our care), DVDs and other dance goodies to read, watch and discuss. Feel free to come in and have a read in this space, you are welcome! And you may run into fellow artists or new friends...

are you a maker or a lover?

decide what you want to be and join the dancehouse
members community!

Dancehouse aims at developing new audiences for dance and to create an intimate environment to share the artists' talent and vision. We truly believe in the power of the moving body to bring meaning into everyone's lives and by becoming a member, you will allow us to take you even further on this journey.

With both memberships, you get plenty of advantages: reduced rates for our shows and spaces, special invitations to exclusive events, complimentary drinks, the Diary delivered in your letter box and the DANCEHOUSE ANNIVERSARY DVD, spanning 20 years of independent dance in Melbourne.

Visit our website www.dancehouse.com.au to sign up for us to take you on a danced ride; all you need to decide is: are you a Lover or a Maker?

independent artist news

» from the dancehouse family tree

Previous Artistic Director Helen Herbertson will travel to Atelier de Paris Carolyn Carlson in June to present her highly praised dance works *Morphia Series* and *Sunstruck*.

atelierdeparis.org

» local dance artists on the move

Alice Dixon and Caroline Meaden will take up a choreographic residency and subsequent performance in Turin, Italy supported by Mosaico Danza in June.

mosaicodanza.it

Melissa Jones will travel to Frankfurt to undertake a mentorship with Forsythe dancer Nicole Peisl during July/August. Melissa is supported by an Australia Council Art Start grant.

Gulsen Ozer will travel to Findhorn Scotland to participate in the Solo Performance Commissioning Project with Deborah Hay in August.

Trevor Patrick will present his work *Continental Drift* at Atelier de Paris Carolyn Carlson in June.

» with love from STRUT

Rachel Arianne Ogle has just completed a development for precipice through a STRUT SEED residency. Exploring the tensions of flight, fall and the balance between, the work features dancers Imanuel Dado, Storm Helmore, Niharika Senapati and Tyrone Robinson.

Alice Lee Holland will premiere her new work *tiny little tragedies* at the Studio Underground, Perth, from Aug 29 - 1 Sept. Featuring performer Paul White, the work examines the tragic implications of the 'tiny' living memories which reside in the body.

strutdance.org.au

» with love from CRITICAL PATH

Choreographer Jason Pitt will undertake research into aggression and repression and its effects on the human body. Using data collected from recent field research, Jason is interested in highlighting rural and remote communities that have settled into states of invisibility. (In residence, Creative Practice Unit, School of Arts and Media, UNSW. July 2-27).

Performance maker Nikki Heywood will continue work on MUSEUM OF THE SUBLIME : relics, an ongoing embodied and theoretical enquiry - into a reliquary of old and new objects and materials encountered through chance and curiosity. Throughout June, as part of Critical Path's 'Research Room Residencies'.

criticalpath.org.au

EVENT CALENDAR

JUNE – AUGUST 2012

june

June 20 to 22 / 6pm – 10pm	DANCEHOUSE ANNIVERSARY SEASON ALIVE! – 20 years / 20 choreographers
June 27 / 7pm – 9pm	Interactive Lecture – Mythbusting posture and movement with ROSSELLA BUONO and CARINA THOMAS
June 25 to July 6 / from 10am (Mon – Fri)	Training – Winter Intensive – with JANE REFSHAUGE, SHELLEY LASICA and WENDY SMITH

july

July 13 to 15	Bodyweather and Butoh training with TESS DE QUINCEY
July 19 / 5.30pm – 7.30pm	Discussion - Simone's Boudoir – What's coming?

august

July 31 – August 4 / 7pm	Performance – ALEXANDRA HARRISON – What's coming?
August 20 / 7pm – 9pm	Interactive Lecture – Mythbusting posture and movement with ROSSELLA BUONO and CARINA THOMAS

CONTRIBUTORS TO DANCEHOUSE DIARY

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DANCEHOUSE TEAM

Angela Conquet, Natalie Cursio, Bridget Flood, Gwen Holmberg-Gilchrist, Albi Care, Lucy Forge (publicist) and our wonderful interns Lise Leclerc and Canela Maldonado.

DANCEHOUSE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Helen Simondson (Chair), Cressida Bradley, Rebecca Hilton, Simon Johansson, Olivia Millard, John Paolacci, Dr. Beth Shelton, Suzanne Stanford, James Thomas.

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fikarisart.tumblr.com

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DANCEHOUSE

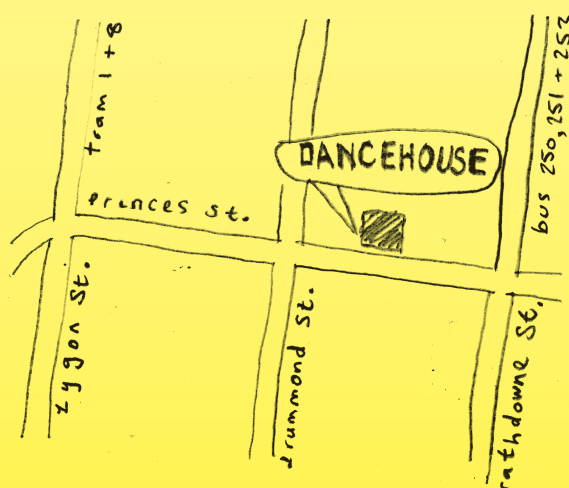
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Dancehouse is situated on Wurunjeri land. We acknowledge the Wurunjeri people who are the Traditional Custodians of the Land on which Dancehouse sits and pay respect to the Elders both past and present of their Kulin Nation.

LOCATION MAP



melways ref: 28:44

