

Queensland Ballet

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR LI CUNXIN



Bespoke

PRODUCTION NOTES FOR THE CLASSROOM

Contextual Information

Queensland Ballet's *Bespoke* 2018 is a triple bill of new dance works, by new artists for new audiences, presented at Brisbane Powerhouse.

— In addition to the three dance performances, *Bespoke* 2018 includes a new dance film screened in the foyer by Cass Mortimer Eipper and an exhibition of photographs by artist David Kelly. *Bespoke* is a platform for art that is thought-provoking and relevant, that generates conversation and engages meaningfully with audiences.

This annual program is a platform for pushing the boundaries of the art form of dance and challenging assumptions about what dance is, what dancers can do and where dance is experienced. *Bespoke* embodies Queensland Ballet's commitment to developing new work and to fostering cross-art form collaborations.

Collaboration is at the heart of *Bespoke* and in 2018 choreographers Gabrielle Nankivell, Jack Lister and Craig Davidson collaborate with composers, costume designers and lighting designers to create their bold vision.

Bespoke is also an exceptional opportunity for dancers to work with new choreographers and be involved in new creative processes. For Queensland Ballet's Jette Parker Young Artists, *Bespoke* provides invaluable experience for these dancers at the beginning of their careers. In 2018 Queensland Ballet also collaborates with Expressions Dance Company to create connection between Brisbane's dance companies and showcase the breadth of dance talent in Brisbane.



Bespoke

Production Credits

Creative Associate Amy Hollingsworth

PERFORMANCES

Parts per Million

Choreographer Craig Davidson
Composer Nicholas Thayer
Costume Designer Alana Sargent
Lighting Designer Cameron Georg
Dancers Queensland Ballet, Jette Parker Young Artists

B-Sides

Choreographer Jack Lister
Music Soundtrack of selected popular artists from the 1960's
Costume Designer Noelene Hill
Lighting Designer Cameron Georg
Dancers Jette Parker Young Artists

Carbon Field

Choreographer Gabrielle Nankivell
Composer Luke Smiles / motion laboratories
Costume Designer Noelene Hill
Lighting Designer Cameron Georg
Dancers Queensland Ballet, Expressions Dance Company, Jette Parker Young Artists, Pre-Professional Program

DANCE FILM

Brute

Director and Choreographer Cass Mortimer Eipper
Dancers Amy Hollingsworth and Jack Lister.
With Vito Bernasconi, Liam Geck, Daniel Kempson, Suguru Otsuka, Samuel Packer, David Power, Ari Thompson, Rian Thompson, Wu Ze
Creative Producers Lucas Thyer, Caitlin Johnston (PixelFrame)
Music Red Sex by Vessel
Costume Design Cass Mortimer Eipper and Noelene Hill
Assistant to the Choreographer Charmene Yap



Choreographers

Craig Davidson

— Australian born choreographer Craig Davidson trained at the New Zealand School of Dance. Throughout his career he performed with the Finnish National Ballet, Royal Ballet of Flanders, Tanz Luzerner Theater and the Semperoper Ballett. He was awarded a Critic's Choice Award by Dance Europe for 'Most Outstanding Performance by a Male Dancer' for his performance in *Impressing the Czar* by William Forsythe with Royal Ballet of Flanders. Craig has performed soloist roles in numerous productions and has worked with highly acclaimed choreographers such as William Forsythe, Jiri Kylian, Matz Ek, Wayne McGregor, Jacopo Godani and Alexander Ekman.

Craig created his first ballet in 2006 at Royal Ballet of Flanders. He choreographed *Momentary* (2009) for the farewell gala for Dinna Bjorn of Finnish National Ballet and *In-Between* (2012) which was awarded a prize at the International Choreographic Contest in Berlin in 2015. His first commissioned work was *Ambiguous Content* for West Australian Ballet (2016) followed by works for Atlanta Ballet and Ballet Dortmund.

Craig has participated in DanceLines at the Royal Opera House in London (2013) and the New York Choreographic Institute (2014 & 2017). His work has been seen internationally in Belgium, Germany, Indonesia and Korea and performed by principal dancers from the Royal Ballet London, Ballet de l'Opéra de Paris, Semperoper Ballett and Ballett Zürich.

In 2017 Craig became the director of Creative Arts Davidson and created *Lightness of Being* for the collective's first project with dancers Melissa Hamilton (Royal Ballet) and Fabien Voranger (Semperoper Ballett). Since then the collective has worked with arts venues such as the Kunsthalle museum in Zürich and season 2018/2019 sees a new collaboration with the Albertinum Museum in Dresden.



Jack Lister

— Following his training at The Australian Ballet School, Jack Lister joined Queensland Ballet in 2014 and has danced featured roles in works choreographed by Christopher Bruce, Nils Christie, Liam Scarlett, Derek Deane, Marc Ribaud and Natalie Weir.

After creating his first ballet for Queensland Ballet in 2015, Jack quickly established a name as a respected emerging choreographer and has created a new work for QB's annual program each year since. In 2017, Jack was long listed for an Australian Dance Award for his work *Fonder Heart*, and created his first main stage work, *Rational/Animal* as part of Queensland Ballet's inaugural *Bespoke* season to audience and critical acclaim. Jack's *Still Life*, created for Queensland Ballet's *Dance Dialogues* season in 2017 was recently remounted for the International Ballet Gala XXVII in Dortmund, Germany to audience acclaim.

In 2019, Jack will work with the Birmingham Royal Ballet on a new world premiere work to be performed across various venues in the UK, including Sadler's Wells.



Choreographers

Cass Mortimer Eipper

— Born in Melbourne, Cass trained at the Australian Ballet School and performed with West Australian Ballet from 2006–2009.

In 2010 Cass became co-director of the Australian dance/media company, Ludwig, where he created and performed in several dance works and won several awards including most Outstanding Performance at the 2011 Rome International Choreography Competition. Cass joined Sydney Dance Company in January 2013 and won the 2015 Helpmann Award for 'Best Male Dancer' in William Forsythe's *Quintett*. Cass has created three works for Sydney Dance Company including their 2015 collaboration with Sydney Symphony, *Le Grand Tango*. Cass has also created several works for West Australian Ballet, Link Dance Company and So You Think You Can Dance, Australia.



Gabrielle Nankivell

— Gabrielle Nankivell is an Australian director and performer with formative ties to Europe.

Working independently and commissioned by leading dance companies and training institutions, Gabrielle also maintains a collaborative creative practice with composer Luke Smiles.

Gabrielle's work has been widely presented across Australia, Europe and Asia. Recent commissions include *Wilbeest* for Sydney Dance Company, nominated for a 2017 Helpmann Award for 'Best Choreography in a Ballet, Dance or Physical Theatre Production', *SURGE* for Dancenorth as part of Festival 2018 for the Commonwealth Games, *Order of Things* and *Focus* for Frontier Danceland Singapore and *Thorn* for Tasdance. She also created *Scatter Study: rethrown* and *Cat Derivé* as Artist in Residence (Contemporary Dance) at the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts. *Split Second Heroes*, her latest, independently produced full-length work, premiered at the Adelaide Festival Centre in July 2017 receiving an Adelaide Critics Circle Individual Award nomination.

Gabrielle has been awarded several coveted international choreographic residencies and is the recipient of the Marten Bequest Travelling Scholarship, two Impulstanz Vienna DanceWEB Scholarships, the inaugural Keith Bain Choreographic Travel Fellowship and the 2015 Tanja Liedtke Fellowship.

Gabrielle also provides choreography and movement consultancy across stage and film productions.

As a dancer Gabrielle honed her dance career in Europe performing for Belgian artists Alexander Baervoets and Ultima Vez/Wim Vandekeybus and collaborating with Jurij Konjar (Slovenia), Raul Maia (Portugal) and Thomas Steyaert (Belgium). She has also lived and worked in Germany and Denmark. Since re-connecting with Australia through her own projects Gabrielle has performed with Australian Dance Theatre, Branch Nebula, Chunky Move/Gideon Obarzanek, Gavin Webber, Regurgitator, The Farm and Torque Show amongst many others.

Gabrielle is currently performing as the Guest Artist with Australian Dance Theatre in *The Beginning of Nature*.



Q&A with Gabrielle Nankivell

Choreographer

What has been the starting point for creating this new work?

— My starting point has been getting to know the 12 dancers I am working with and setting up an open, equal and creative space for collaboration. I usually take this approach whenever I'm working with new dancers so that the work I'm creating evolves from, and is reflective of, the people engaged in the process. It's important to me that the dancers feel a sense of ownership in the work.

This work is a collaboration with dancers from Queensland Ballet and Expressions Dance Company. Everyone involved has worked with a large range of choreographers and creative processes, performed different repertoire and honed different techniques. I was interested to explore this broad spectrum of experience, particularly in regards to how we each perceive virtuosity — as a concept and in relation to our individual dance practice. Our relationship to virtuosity seems quite malleable, which got me thinking about the duality of what we experience when we dance and what we experience when we watch dance.

Extreme strength and extreme fragility or put differently, extreme rigour and extreme abandonment, are aspects of duality that dancers negotiate daily. As dancers, we continually push ourselves to be precise and masterful but also to be vulnerable, to be real and to move towards a precarious state. How do we keep extending ourselves in either direction along this broad spectrum without falling over the edge or breaking? Exploring this duality was the starting point for this new work.

Have there been any other inspirations or influences that have shaped your ideas outside of your creative team?

— My brother, who is a geologist, showed me some fascinating images of minerals at different depths of magnification. I was intrigued that substances that looked very different on the surface could look so similar when viewed at a deep level of magnification, while other substances that looked identical on the surface could be completely different at a structural level.

This then got me thinking about the element of carbon and the two extreme variables it could become. In one form it is graphite, soft and crumbly, and in another form it is diamond, one of the hardest natural materials. The range between graphite and diamond was a useful parallel to the dancers and the spectrum they were exploring. Both encompass the duality of extreme fragility and softness, and extreme strength and hardness. Another parallel is that carbon occurs in all living things and therefore also makes up the body of a dancer. I enjoy the idea of the body as material so combining this with the sensory information of the graphite/diamond spectrum offered a very tactile influence on the work.



Q&A with Gabrielle Nankivell

Choreographer

Why is collaboration important to you and how does it shape your creative process?

— I'm a collaborative person by nature. I enjoy the process of figuring out and building things in the space that sits between people — between creatives and between the performers and the audience. In the case of the creative team — performers, composers, designers — this space is where the dialogue happens. As a director I am an 'ideas wrangler'.

I facilitate a space for creativity. I drive the process, guide the aesthetic and shape the work. It is also the conversations I have with someone in the team, like the sound designer or a performer, that strongly impact what takes place in the studio. The creative team take a lot of feedback directly from what takes place in the room so in this way the collaborative process is circular and the piece itself starts to tell us how it should be made.

What is your process of collaboration with composer Luke Smiles?

— Luke and I have collaborated on numerous projects together. Usually Luke is in the studio from the beginning of the rehearsal period, creating the music alongside the choreography, but in the case of *Bespoke* he is joining us later in the process.

Luke and I have had preliminary conversations about the concept in the lead up to the creative development, exploring the aural landscapes that exist at either end of the spectrum. We've discussed the different qualitative elements that might make up these landscapes and how they could be represented through sound. Luke will be exploring the progressive transition from the world of graphite to the world of diamond, morphing from qualities that are murky, raw, organic, atonal to manufactured, brilliant, light, clear and tonal.



Q&A with Cass Mortimer Eipper

Choreographer

What is the concept behind *Brute*?

— This piece is about duality. How we try to restrain the untameable beast within us and how this in turn contorts and mystifies our consciousness. We are confused, desperate creatures. We yearn to be unique and empowered while ignoring our default settings. We are wild, wonderful, anxious, desperate animals.

Were there any sources of inspiration you drew on in creating *Brute*?

— I am a big fan of the film maker David Fincher. Despite being a director of drama, his ability to capture behaviour through camera movement is truly special.

How do you communicate meaning through dance on film compared to dance on the stage?

— The main point of difference is the role of editing. The way that a film is cut together is almost like an additional character. On stage, we have the benefit of real people in real time, however, on film we have the benefit of warping time and space however we choose. We can also choose to put our audience wherever we want!

How have you approached choreographing for film compared to choreographing for the stage?

— Our aim as film makers is to make the viewer feel like they are very much part of the environment, rather than just an observer of the environment. We take into account that everything is going to be felt, as much as it is seen.

It's impossible to get the same completely visceral experience watching a film versus a live performance, because with live performance you have a real person in front of you. The benefit of film however, is that you can specifically direct your viewer's focus to what you're wanting them to look at.

The rehearsal process for *Brute* has been very different to what I'd usually do when creating a performance for stage. I've had to break it up according to how I imagined the piece would be put together on film, like creating separate puzzle pieces. I had to think about how each piece would come together to create a complete, united picture as opposed to creating a linear experience for stage.

How did you develop your movement language?

— My choreographic style has changed a lot over the last 10 years. Considering that evolution, it is quite difficult to articulate what my movement language is now. I have constantly pursued the sweet spot between the coordinated and the awkward. I am attentive to nuance and believe that context is everything. We always experience movement relationally. How we juxtapose and amplify movement completely changes how it can be viewed and made to speak to us — both as performers and as members of an audience.

Why is collaboration important to you and how does it shape your creative process?

— I believe that excellence can only be achieved through sharing, and that by building on each other's skills, we can produce so much more than the sum of our parts.

In regard to choreography, there is no more important a collaborator than the dancers you create on. At some point in a process you must always transfer ownership. The performer must bring the work to fruition. I hope to always enhance what a performer already has to offer instead of transforming them into something I want them to be.

Queensland Ballet

For more information about how Queensland Ballet
supports students and teachers, or to discuss
ways to get involved with us, please contact:

community@queenslandballet.com.au
queenslandballet.com.au

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