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Queensland **Ballet**

Media Release

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BALLET MEETS BIG BAND IN DANCE SPECTACULAR



Queensland Ballet's upcoming season of *Strictly Gershwin* is already the Company's highest selling production ever, with weeks to go until opening.

The season, opening at the Lyric Theatre on 27 May until 4 June, will see the Company step out in style on a huge scale accompanied by a jazz big band live on stage.

Artistic Director, Li Cunxin, says it's a bold move in a different direction for Queensland Ballet but he believes ballet fans will love it and that its a great opportunity to build new audiences.

"Despite this season being our highest ever selling production, it's not yet sold out but is selling fast so I encourage people to purchase their tickets as soon as possible," Mr Li said.

" Evoking memories of the silver screen magic of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, *Strictly Gershwin* will delight audiences with the much loved **Gershwin** music paired with so many different forms of dance," Mr Li said.

"We're so pleased to be working in partnership with Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) to bring this acclaimed production to Brisbane that we're sure will have a wide appeal.

"Former Artistic Director of English National Ballet (ENB), **Derek Deane**, choreographed this dazzling production on ENB and this will be the first time another company has performed the work.

"His choreography demands impeccable technique and versatility in so many different forms of dance which our dancers have taken to with gusto.

"This production has something for everyone including beautiful classical ballet, big tap dancing numbers, sweeping musical theatre style performances and jazz dance alongside glamorous ballroom dancing."

Not only will audiences experience Queensland Ballet dancing like they've never seen before, they'll also be enthralled by the Queensland Symphony Orchestra (QSO) big band live on stage that is very much a part of the production.

Joined by singers live on stage for some of the bigger numbers, the band will bring home some of the most loved of the Gerhswin songs like *Summertime*, *I Got Rythm*, *An American in Paris*, *S'Wonderful* and *Rhapsody in Blue*.

"We're so pleased to have some of the best voices on the Australian stage with us for this production," said Mr Li.

"Rachael Beck, Michael Falzon, Luke Kennedy and Alexandra Flood will join with our dancers and the QSO to deliver an audience experience like nothing we've ever done before."

QPAC Chief Executive John Kotzas said collaborating with local arts companies to produce and present exceptional live performance experiences and build new audiences is vital.

"We are continuously focused on securing opportunities to bring unique new works to Australian audiences and present them with our local companies and artists for the first time at QPAC. Working with our state ballet company, Queensland Ballet, we have realised this with *Strictly Gershwin*," Mr Kotzas said.

"Together with our state orchestra, QSO performing on stage, this will be a memorable showcase season for Queensland and bound to attract our ballet, music and musical theatre loving audiences as well as new audiences who have a love for the golden era of music, dance and film that inspired this work originally," said Mr Kotzas.

The production is on such a big scale that Queensland Ballet has had to bring on guest dancers to swell its ranks for *Gershwin*.

"I'm delighted to announce that former QB principals Christian Tatchev, Matthew Lawrence and Rachael Walsh will all be returning to the stage for *Gershwin* in various ways, it will be wonderful to see these talented dancers back performing with our Company," Mr Li said.



"We've also scoured the country to ensure we have the best of the best in tap dancing talent for our big tapping performances headed up by the amazing Bill Simpson who is a tap dancing powerhouse and his tapping partner Kris Kerr."

Guest tappers include Adam Di Martino, Andrew Ross-Graham, Jayden Grogran, Shay Debney, Amber Miller-Greenman, Natasha Window, Tiarna Leigh, Victora Rimington.

Other casual company dancers for *Gershwin* are Karla Florez, Phebe Murison and Zacharie Dun who have all previously danced with Queensland Ballet.

"For a while now, Queensland Ballet productions have been expertly accompanied by the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, however this season will take that partnership to a whole other level with the orchestra out of the pit and on stage," Mr Li said.

"From the celebrated *Rhapsody in Blue* to a medley of Broadway musicals and Hollywood films, there are so many favourite melodies packed into this show.

"**Gareth Valentine**, who worked with Derek Deane to adapt the music, is a charismatic music director whose exuberant presence on stage adds a wonderful element to the performance.

"In addition to the wonderful QSO, we've even had to bring in specialist musicians. We're pleased to be joined by our very own ballet pianist Kylie Foster and guest pianist Daniel Le, an extraordinary young pianist who has won numerous national and international awards.

"We can't wait to share this unique season with our audiences as we take to the stage bigger and better than ever."

Strictly Gershwin runs from **27 May until 4 June** in the Lyric Theatre, QPAC. For tickets and further information visit www.queenslandballet.com.au

Guest Singer Biographies



One of Australia's leading performers, ***Rachael Beck*** is best known for her musical theatre success in such high profile musicals such as *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Cabaret*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *The Sound of Music* and *Beauty and the Beast*.

She has worked extensively across stage and television in Australia and has been nominated for and received numerous awards for her work.

Michael Falzon has a wide variety of musical theatre credits to his name including a number of lead roles performed both in Australia and internationally. His stand out roles have been in *We Will Rock You*, *The War of the Worlds* and *ATOMIC - The New Rock Musical*.

Michael has also been a soloist with the Sydney, Adelaide, Western Australian and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. **



Luke Kennedy is an accomplished music theatre performer with iconic performances in *Les Miserables*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Grease* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Luke shot to international attention as the 2013 runner up on *The Voice* television series and has also toured internationally with the TEN Tenors.

Luke currently divides his time between performing as part of the big band group Swing on This and as a regular presenter on Channel Seven's *Great South East*.

Alexandra Flood made her professional operatic debut in 2014 as a young artists at the Salzburg Festival singing with the Vienna Philharmonic.

Alexandra has won numerous awards both Australia and internationally. She is currently completing a Master of Musiktheater in Munich, Germany.



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Behind the scenes

If you're just getting to know QB, our fan pages on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Pinterest](#) and [Instagram](#) are a great way to keep up-to-date with what the Company is doing, both behind the scenes and on the stage.

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Photography

Queensland Ballet dancers Shane Weurthner and Lisa Edwards. Photo Simon Lekias

Queensland Ballet dancers Rian Thompson and Jack Lister. Photo Simon Lekias.

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