

Garth Welch

Brisbane-born Garth Welch studied dance initially with Phyllis Danaher and began his stage career in *Call Me Madam* for the J. C. Williamson organisation. He was noticed by Edouard Borovansky and joined the Borovansky Ballet in 1954, eventually achieving the status of leading dancer with that company. He also danced with Western Theatre Ballet (later Scottish Ballet) and the Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas before returning to Australia as a foundation member of the Australian Ballet in 1962. He was a principal dancer with the Australian Ballet until his retirement from the company in 1973. During his time with the Australian Ballet, Welch danced the lead in all the major classical ballets in the company's repertoire and created roles in Robert Helpmann's *Display* and *Yugen* and in John Butler's *Threshold*. He partnered the Australian Ballet's principal dancers including Marilyn Jones, Kathleen Gorham and Marilyn Rowe, and partnered guest artists including Margot Fonteyn.

In the 1970s he worked with Ballet Victoria both as a choreographer and as associate artistic director. During that time he danced Hilarion and later Albrecht to Natalia Makarova's *Giselle* in Ballet Victoria's staging of *Giselle* Act II in 1975. In 1976 he appeared as the Blackamoor in *Petrouchka* for the appearances by Valery and Galina Panov for Ballet Victoria.

Welch was artistic director of West Australian Ballet from 1980 to 1982 and throughout the 1980s and 1990s taught extensively across Australia. In the 1980s Welch also worked with Sydney Dance Company. In 1984 Graeme Murphy created the role of von Aschebach in *After Venice* on Welch and Welch performed this role to singular acclaim in Australia, Europe and New York. With Sydney Dance Company Welch also performed in Murphy's *Late Afternoon of a Faun*. In the 1990s Welch returned to musical theatre and appeared in *The Game of Love and Chance* in 1990, *How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying* in 1993 and *Nijinsky at Twilight* in 1998.

Welch choreographed *Variations on a Theme* for the Australian Ballet in 1964. Since that first piece, he has created many more works for the flagship company as well as pieces for West Australian Ballet, Ballet Victoria, Ballet Philippines, Royal New Zealand Ballet, the Queensland Ballet and Sydney Dance Company. His major works include *Othello* made originally for the Australian Ballet School in 1968 and staged by the Australian Ballet in 1970 and *KAL*, his first full-length work made for West Australian Ballet in 1979. Welch was inducted into the Australian Dance Awards Hall of Fame in 2002.