

## Sydney Dance Company

Sydney Dance Company began life as the Dance Company (NSW). Originally a dance-in-education group, it was founded in 1965 by Suzanne Musitz (Davidson) under the name Ballet in a Nutshell and later Athletes and Dancers. By the 1970s it had become a full-time performing group with federal and state government support and was led by Musitz until 1974. In 1975 and 1976 the company was directed by Dutch-born choreographer and dancer Jaap Flier. Graeme Murphy was appointed artistic director of the company at the end of 1976 and has directed it ever since. The name change to Sydney Dance Company took place in 1979.

Under Murphy and his associate director Janet Vernon, Sydney Dance Company has consolidated its position as a major Australian contemporary dance company. The company made its first overseas tour in 1980 when it travelled to Italy. A tour to the United States, England and Hong Kong followed in 1981. Since then Sydney Dance has undertaken over 25 international tours throughout the United States, Europe, South America, New Zealand and Asia. The company also tours nationally.

Under Murphy's directorship, Sydney Dance Company's repertoire was made up predominantly of original works by Murphy often with original Australian music and design. Highlights of the Murphy repertoire for Sydney Dance Company, and its predecessor the Dance Company (NSW) when under Murphy's direction, include *Poppy* (1978), the company's first full length work, *Rumours* (1978-1979), *Sheherazade* (1979), *Viridian* (1980), *Daphnis and Chloe* (1980), *An Evening* (1981), *Homelands* (1982), *Some Rooms* (1983), *After Venice* (1984), *Boxes* (1985), *Nearly Beloved* (1986), *Shining* (1986), *Late Afternoon of a Faun* (1987), *Vast* (1988), a Bicentennial project made in collaboration with the Queensland Ballet, West Australian Ballet and Australian Dance Theatre, *Kraanerg* (1988), *Song of the Night* (1989), *Soft Bruising* (1990), *King Roger* (1990), *Bard Bits* (1991), *Piano Sonata* (1992), *Synergy with Synergy* (1992), *Beauty and the Beast* (1993), *The Protecting Veil* (1993), *Fornicon* (1995), *Berlin* (1995), *Free Radicals* (1996), *Salome* (1998), *Air and Other Invisible Forces* (1999), *Mythologia* (2000), for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Arts Festival, *Body of Work* (2000), a retrospective program, *Ellipse* (2002), *Shades of Gray* (2004) based on the Oscar Wilde story of ageing as told through the character of Dorian Gray, and in 2005 *Grand*, which premiered at the Sydney Opera House on 28 May 2005 and which was dedicated to Murphy's mother who died in 2004. In May 2006 Murphy premiered *The Director's Cut*, a triple bill consisting of a revival of his early work, *Glimpses*, and two new works, *Gossamer* with choreography by Narelle Benjamin, and *Cut* in which Murphy draws on signature choreographic phrases to explore and recut. Murphy and Vernon's farewell tribute to Melbourne in 2007 was entitled *Ever after Ever* and comprised a new work *Short Stories* choreographed to Carl Vine's *Anne Landa Preludes* as well as a selection from *Tivoli*, *Air and Other Invisible Forces*, *Ellipse* and *Berlin*.

Since its inception Sydney Dance Company has also always presented the work of choreographers other than Murphy, both Australian and non-Australian, and has also staged choreographic workshop programs for which company members have created original works. Australians whose work has been presented by Sydney Dance Company include Graeme Watson, Paul Mercurio, Gideon Obarzanek, Stephen Baynes, Don Asker, Stephen Page, Kim Walker, Barry Moreland, Ian

Spink and Garth Welch. Non Australians whose choreography has been staged by Sydney Dance Company include Louis Falco (*Black and Blue* in 1984), Ohad Naharin (*Tabula Rasa* in 1988 and *Arbos* in 1989), Ralph Lemon (*Happy Trails* in 1989), Douglas Wright (*Gloria* in 1993) and Stephen Petronio (*Underland*, a commissioned work for which the company received an Australian Dance Award for outstanding performance in 2003).

In July 2006 Murphy and Vernon resigned as artistic director and associate artistic director of the company. In May 2007, it was announced that Tanya Liedtke would be the new artistic director. However on August 17, 2007, prior to taking up the appointment, Liedtke tragically died in an accident. In 2008 the company presented three world premieres from guest choreographers Meryl Tankard (*Inuk 2*), Rafael Bonachela (*360 Degrees*), and Aszure Barton.