



MEDIA RELEASE

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RESEARCHERS FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE TURN THE SPOTLIGHT ON AUSTRALIAN DANCE THEATRE FOR NEW RESEARCH PROJECT STARTING THIS WEEK.

25 February 2014: A groundbreaking research project exploring “distributed thinking” and creativity will start this Thursday, 27th of February in Adelaide by a team of respected researchers from around the globe, Australian Dance Theatre dancers and Artistic Director, Garry Stewart.

Titled “Thinking Brains and Bodies” the project starts from the idea that thinking is not restricted to the brain of an individual but can be distributed across a group. Questions such as where does creativity reside, how does collaboration impact innovation and what fosters group recollection will be addressed at the Hawthorn Studio over the three-year research project.

Project leader, Professor Kate Stevens from The MARCS Institute at the University of Western Sydney, expects that outcomes will have application not only within the Arts community, but across a range of broader industries.

“Dance is often considered a non-verbal art form mainly experienced through movement and intuition, but in both creation and performance it draws from deeply multi-modal processes where sensation, perception, emotion and action are entangled in skills such as imagining, problem solving, recollecting and communicating.”

“This project points the microscope on the “situated” world of dance and the collaborative nature of this particular ensemble. These dance processes are universal, and I expect that the results will have application not only to the arts but to innovation and problem solving in education, IT and business,” she said.

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Psychologists are keen to harness creative industries because of their long-held interest in understanding innovation and organisations. A contemporary dance studio, where the choreographer and dancers collaborate and improvise to generate new ideas, offers a real-world setting to record and analyse behavior and the “distributed and embodied thinking” that psychologists theorise leads to creative outcomes.

Over three years, with support from the Australian Research Council Linkage Project scheme and Australian Dance Theatre, the research team will record studio processes and conduct experiments involving the dancers.

“Experiments will include investigating the flow of creative thinking to see when new ideas emerge during the improvisation process. We will study solo versus collaborative scenarios, analyse group recollection, and investigate whether dancers have a heightened sense of one’s own body in space and through touch,” said Professor Stevens.

This project builds on research conducted through leading contemporary dance companies such as Wayne McGregor|Random Dance in London and The Forsythe Company and Artistic Director, Garry Stewart said that the Australian Dance Theatre was thrilled to join such distinguished company.

“I believe it is so important to engage with scientific ideas to advance contemporary artistic practice. To research new ideas around creative and collaborative processes that can also impact thinking in other domains such as education and social policy is within the ambit of what we strive to do – evoke new ideas that change the way society views the assumptions on which it is founded,” he said.

This project tackles complex research problems and as such needs scrutiny from many perspectives. The research team lead by Professor Kate Stevens includes; dance researchers Dr Scott deLahunta from Coventry University and Motion Bank, The Forsythe Company, Professor Kim Vincs from Deakin University, anthropologist Professor James Leach from the University of Western Australia, cognitive neuroscientist Professor Mike Nicholls from Flinders University, and cognitive scientist Professor David Kirsh from the University of California, San Diego.

The team flies in this week for the first stage of the research study which will be held at the Australian Dance Theatre Studio on Thursday, 27th and Friday 28th of February 2014.

Ends.



Media Opportunity: Interviews and pictures are available with research team, Australian Dance Theatre Dancers and Artistic Director, Garry Stewart on the 27th of February 2014 at 1pm at Australian Dance Theatre, 126 Belair Road, Hawthorn.

Further details are available on the Australian Dance Theatre website: www.adt.org.au

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Australian Dance Theatre – Celebrating 50 Years in 2015

Australian Dance Theatre has a rich history full of wonderful stories and achievements that have lead it to its current world-class status, a dancing phenomenon that continues to push new boundaries across the globe, making it one of Adelaide's and Australia's greatest exports and ambassadors today.

Dr Elizabeth Cameron Dalman OAM and patron for the 50th anniversary celebrations founded the Australian Dance Theatre in 1965 after she was inspired by her experience in New York and by the Australian environment. It was the first time modern and contemporary dance was taught in Australia.

Since then, the Australian Dance Theatre has grown to be one of the most influential dance companies in the country and has been producing consistently great repertoire since it was formed.

Australian Dance Theatre is highly regarded within Australia and beyond. Under the artistic direction of Garry Stewart since the end of 1999, the Australian Dance Theatre embarked on a remarkably successful artistic trajectory that has distinguished it as a daring, exciting and highly skilled ensemble. As a result, they enjoy an enviable national and international reputation and is currently regarded as one of the most widely recognised contemporary dance companies in the world.

Ends.

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