

NEWS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

For immediate release: Thursday 7 December 2017



The Australian Ballet's *Spartacus*. Photo Justin Ridler.

The Australian Ballet unleashes a reimagined *Spartacus* in 2018

In 2018, the astounding strength and agility of The Australian Ballet's male dancers will be on full display in a powerful new production of *Spartacus*. One of the company's most popular works, the tale of a gladiator who led a slave uprising against the Roman Empire will be given new life by Lucas Jervies, choreographer, director and a former dancer with The Australian Ballet. The world premiere of *Spartacus* will storm the stage in Melbourne at Arts Centre Melbourne from 18 to 29 September 2018, followed by a Sydney season at Sydney Opera House from 9 to 24 November 2018.

Spartacus tells the heroic story of an enslaved gladiator who dreams of freedom, leads an insurrection, and dies tragically; the passionate devotion of Spartacus to his wife Flavia lends extra poignancy to the tale. Jervies' reimagining of the ancient story will imbue it with emotional complexity, a modern-day sensibility and high-impact ballet choreography.

Commenting on the world premiere production, The Australian Ballet's Artistic Director David McAllister said: "We are thrilled to bring audiences this bold new reimagining of a classic tale from one of Australia's freshest choreographic talents. Our brand-new *Spartacus* will dispel the myth that ballet is only about pointe shoes and tutus as we showcase our male dancers at their spirited and athletic best."

A graduate of The Australian Ballet School, Lucas Jervies was David McAllister's dramaturge on his lavish production of *The Sleeping Beauty*. His recent dance projects include directing and choreographing *Little Red Riding Hood* for

Queensland Ballet, and he has created dance works for numerous other companies, including Sydney Dance Company, The Australian Ballet, West Australian Ballet, Opera Australia, Scapino Ballet Rotterdam, Louisville Ballet, Milwaukee Ballet and Stuttgart Ballet.

French designer Jérôme Kaplan, who won a Green Room Award for Visual Design for his work on The Australian Ballet's *Cinderella* in 2013, will create period sets and costumes. Combat coaching from world-renowned fight director Nigel Poulton will bring to life the brutality of ancient Rome. Aram Khachaturian's soaring, cinematic score will lend an epic scope to the production.

Spartacus is a perennial favourite in the repertoire of The Australian Ballet. The company first performed it in 1978 at the Palais Theatre, with choreography by László Seregi. In 1990 the production toured to New York and Washington, where Principal Artist Steven Heathcote received rave reviews and developed a cult following. It was last performed in full in 2002, and a *Spartacus pas de deux*, choreographed by Jervies, was performed as part of the outdoor program *Ballet Under the Stars* in 2016.

Spartacus

When the Roman consul Crassus returns home from another victory in the Empire's merciless war, he is honoured with gladiatorial games. Spartacus, a Thracian warrior and champion of the gladiator ring, will be forced to fight for the amusement of his Roman captors. Weathered and broken by years of brutality in the arena, Spartacus' only salvation is his love for his long-lost wife Flavia. As he prepares for battle, he is at once elated and heartbroken to discover that his wife is alive but has also been enslaved by the Romans.

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Spartacus is forced to slay his close friend Hermes in the arena. Horrified by his deed, he is spurred to rebellion and incites his fellow captives to break free of their chains. They force their way into Crassus' property, rescuing Flavia and taking the consul prisoner. Rather than execute him, Spartacus engages Crassus in hand-to-hand combat, but when the Roman loses the fight and threatens Flavia's life, a struggle ensues during which Crassus' son is killed.

Crassus summons his legions to seek vengeance on the escaped Spartacus, eventually overpowering the rebels who, under Spartacus' leadership, fight courageously to the bitter end. Flavia escapes the clutches of Rome and vows that Spartacus' memory will live forever.

SPARTACUS

Choreography Lucas Jervies

Music Aram Khachaturian

Costume and set design Jérôme Kaplan

Lighting design Jon Buswell

Dramaturge Imara Savage

Fight director Nigel Poulton

MELBOURNE

18 – 29 SEPTEMBER

Arts Centre Melbourne

State Theatre

with Orchestra Victoria

SYDNEY

9 – 24 NOVEMBER

Sydney Opera House

Joan Sutherland Theatre

with Opera Australia Orchestra

BOOKINGS

australianballet.com.au

STEP INSIDE

Discover a world of pointe shoes, pirouettes and life-long passions with The Australian Ballet's Step Inside program.

Boys Day

In this special day of dancing, budding male dancers can take class taught by one of the company's male artists.

Melbourne, Arts Centre Melbourne

Saturday 22 September

Sydney, Sydney Opera House

Saturday 10 November

McAllister in Conversation

Artistic Director David McAllister hosts an insightful conversation with a luminary from the ballet world.

Melbourne, Arts Centre Melbourne

Saturday 22 September

Sydney, Sydney Opera House

Saturday 10 November

Post Performance Q&A

Spartacus audiences are invited to stay back after the show for a special Q&A with dancers and creatives.

Melbourne, Arts Centre Melbourne

Monday 24 September

Sydney, Sydney Opera House

Monday 12 November

Behind the Scenes

Watch the dancers take their class on stage and enjoy a rare opportunity to see a principal couple fine-tune their technique.

Melbourne, Arts Centre Melbourne

Tuesday 25 September

Sydney, Sydney Opera House

Friday 16 November

The Music of the Dance

Audiences will hear from Music Director and Chief Conductor Nicolette Fraillon about the score of the ballet and what it's like to be in the pit during a performance.

Melbourne, Arts Centre Melbourne

Wednesday 26 and Saturday 29 September

Sydney, Sydney Opera House

Wednesday 21 November and Saturday 24 November

Open Classes

These classes give young dancers the chance to perfect their skills and learn new techniques, including some that The Australian Ballet's dancers use themselves.

Melbourne, Arts Centre Melbourne

Friday 28 September

Sydney, Sydney Opera House

Sunday 11 November

For all media enquiries, including interviews and images, please contact:

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