

## Opening its 2016 season at top speed, The Australian Ballet's contemporary triple bill *Vitesse* pushes the boundaries of ballet



Imogen Chapman. Photo by Justin Ridler

The Australian Ballet's contemporary triple bill *Vitesse* is ballet at full voltage. Three stripped-back abstract works by three of the world's leading choreographers show the men and women of the Company at their strongest and fastest, shaking the artform to its foundations. *Vitesse* runs at **Arts Centre Melbourne** from **11-21 March**, and **Sydney Opera House** from **26 April-16 May**.

*Vitesse* sees three uniquely masterful works combine to create a heart-pounding night of modern ballet. **Christopher Wheeldon's *DGV: Danse à Grande Vitesse*** evokes the flickering intensity of a high-speed train as it passes through a tunnel; **Jiří Kylián's** haunting and fluid *Forgotten Land* explores loss and change with long swirling dresses in a desolate seascape; and **William Forsythe's *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated*** is sleek and dangerous, pushing beyond the bounds of ballet technique with a superhuman force.

The Australian Ballet's Artistic Director, David McAllister, looks forward to staging this potent combination of works. "Kylian, Forsythe and Wheeldon have each taken 19<sup>th</sup>-century ballet technique and used it to create these three influential contemporary works," McAllister said. "Following our recent *Chroma* and *20:21* seasons, *Vitesse* will showcase our Company at their most powerful and athletic."

An Australian premiere, Christopher Wheeldon's 2006 *DGV: Danse à Grande Vitesse* is set to a score by celebrated British composer **Michael Nyman**, which Nyman created for the inauguration of the north

European line of France's *Train à grande vitesse* (TGV). Inspired by the disappearance and emergence of a train passing through a tunnel, Wheeldon's work sees dancers hurtling from detailed mass ensemble work to finely wrought *pas de deux* against a steely minimal set.

Beloved by dancers and audiences for poetic works such as *After the Rain*, last performed by The Australian Ballet in 2011, Wheeldon is one of the most celebrated choreographers working today. He is Artistic Associate of The Royal Ballet, London, and has created dance pieces for Boston Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Dutch National Ballet and Pennsylvania Ballet. In 2007 he founded Morphoses/The Wheeldon Company and became the first British choreographer to create a new work for the Bolshoi Ballet. In 2012 he collaborated with Marriott on the closing ceremony of the London Olympic Games. Wheeldon has been the recipient of a Tony Award, a London Critics' Circle Award and an Olivier Award.

Jiří Kylián's *Forgotten Land* is an emotional, nocturnal vision recalling times passed, lost lands and loved ones, and the ebb and flow of the tides. The piece draws inspiration from an Edvard Munch painting of a woman alone on a barren shore. **Benjamin Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem*** sets a mournful tone as couples entwine and part, by turns fluid and furious, in dramatic hues of black, white and red. *Forgotten Land* is the sombre counterpoint to *Petite Mort* and *Sechs Tänze*, hits of The Australian Ballet's 2014 season of *Chroma*.

Czech choreographer Jiří Kylián was artistic director of Nederlands Dans Theater from 1975 to 1999, and remained the company's house choreographer for a further ten years. As well as dozens of works created for NDT, he has choreographed for Stuttgart Ballet, the Paris Opéra Ballet, Munich Bayerisches Staatsballett and Tokyo Ballet. His awards and honours include Officer of the Royal Dutch Order of Orange-Nassau, an honorary doctorate from the Juilliard School in New York, and the Honorary Medal from the President of the Czech Republic.

William Forsythe's ground-breaking *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated* was commissioned by Rudolf Nureyev for the Paris Opéra Ballet in 1987 and made international stars of Forsythe and the leading cast, which included Sylvie Guillem.

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

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Chic and dangerous, nine dancers prowl the stage, their rapid-fire solos and duets pulling focus from one another and extending beyond balletic technique in ways that rattled the dance world at the work's Paris premiere. Forsythe's close collaborator on over 60 ballet scores, **Thom Willems** provides the propulsive electronic soundtrack.

William Forsythe was appointed Resident Choreographer of Stuttgart Ballet in 1976. In 1984, he became director of the Ballet Frankfurt, and after the company's closure twenty years later he established a new ensemble, The Forsythe Company, which he directed from 2005 to 2015. Forsythe and his ensembles have been the recipients of the Laurence Olivier Award, the Wexner Prize, the Golden Lion of the Venice Biennale, the Samuel H Scripps/American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement, the Hessische Kulturpreis, and the Swedish Carina Ari Medal. Forsythe was given the title of Commandeur des Arts et Lettres by the government of France and has received the German Distinguished Service Cross.

#### What the critics had to say:

"full of striking images of sculptural beauty" – *The Telegraph* (UK) on *DGV: Danse à Grande Vitesse*®

"intensely moving" – *The Age* on *Forgotten Land*

"a daredevil exploration of the limits of ballet technique, informed by a thrilling suspense" – *The New York Times* on *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated*

#### CREDITS

##### DGV: DANSE À GRANDE VITESSE® (2006)

Choreography Christopher Wheeldon

Guest Repetiteur Jason Fowler

Music Michael Nyman *MGV: Musique à Grande Vitesse Set and costume design* Jean-Marc Puissant

*DGV*® is produced in association with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London. This production was first seen at the Royal Opera House on 17th November, 2006.

Lighting design Jennifer Tipton

reproduced by Jesse Belsky

##### FORGOTTEN LAND (1981)

Choreography Jiří Kylián

Assistant to the Choreographer Roslyn Anderson

Music Benjamin Britten *Sinfonia da Requiem*

Costume and set design John F Macfarlane

Lighting design Kees Tjebbes

Tech adaptation Joost Biegelaar

##### IN THE MIDDLE, SOMEWHAT ELEVATED (1987)

Choreography William Forsythe

Staged by Kathryn Bennetts

Music Thom Willems

In collaboration with Lesley Stuck

Costume, set and lighting design William Forsythe

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#### DATES

##### Melbourne

**11-21 March (11 performances)**

Arts Centre Melbourne, State Theatre with Orchestra Victoria

##### Sydney

**26 April-16 May (11 performances)**

Sydney Opera House, Joan Sutherland Theatre with Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra

#### SPECIAL EVENTS

Audiences are invited to step inside the ballet with special events during the *Vitesse* seasons.

##### McAllister in Conversation

Artistic Director David McAllister hosts an intimate talk with a luminary from the ballet world.

**Melbourne** Saturday 12 March, 5pm-5.45pm

**Sydney** Saturday 30 April, 5pm-5.45pm

Tickets \$25

#### Q&A

Stay behind after the show for a special Q&A with Artistic Director David McAllister and a panel of artistic staff and dancers.

**Melbourne** Monday 14 March

**Sydney** Monday 9 May

#### Behind the Scenes

A unique behind-the-scenes look at the life of a dancer. Watch the Company take their daily morning class, and then see two lead dancers in a private coaching session as they prepare for an upcoming performance.

**Melbourne** Tuesday 15 March, 11.30am-12.30pm

Tickets \$19-\$29

#### In the Middle Program

Elevate your heartrate with this 45-minute, fully staged performance of William Forsythe's ground-breaking *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated*.

**Melbourne** Thursday 17 March, 12.30pm-1.15pm

**Sydney** Wednesday 4 May, 12.30pm-1.15pm

Tickets \$29-\$40

#### BOOKINGS

[australianballet.com.au/vitesse](http://australianballet.com.au/vitesse)

or call 1300 369 741

View and share The Australian Ballet's one-minute video clip for *Vitesse*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdeQGD5jCfA>

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