

The Australian Ballet expands its ranks to 79, its largest ensemble to date, with ten new recruits, four returning faces and a number of promotions in 2016



Photo by Lynette Willis

The dancers of The Australian Ballet are back in the studio today following their summer break, with ten new additions at the barre, alongside a number of recently-promoted dancers starting the year in a new rank.

With 79 full-time dancers – up from 68 in 2015 – the national company employs its largest ensemble to date. The expansion of the company will allow The Australian Ballet to introduce exciting new programs and bring ballet to ever greater audiences, as part of its five-year strategic plan.

New and returning dancers

In 2016, nine graduates from The Australian Ballet School join the Company as members of the corps de ballet (entry rank). **Isobelle Dashwood, Evie Ferris, Sean Kiley, Mason Lovegrove, Montana Rubin, Georgia Scott-Hunter, Edward Smith, Aya Watanabe and Lucien Xu** will be recognisable to regional audiences from their performances in The Dancers Company tour last year.

Audiences who voted for the Telstra People's Choice Award winner in 2012 will be glad to see **Jake Mangahakia** return to the company as a member of the corps de ballet. Jake re-joins the Company following a two-year break to do missionary work in Canada.

Coryphée **Jaqueline Clark** returned home to Australia to join the Company in July 2015, having spent time overseas dancing with The Royal Ballet. Jaqueline continues her work with the Company in 2016.

Jessica Wood and **Melody Martin** also joined the Company in 2015, and will continue their work in the corps de ballet.

A graduate of The Australian Ballet School who danced

for two years with Queensland Ballet, **Nathan Brook** joins the corps de ballet in 2016.

Departures

The Australian Ballet bids farewell to two stand-out dancers who departed at the end of 2015.

Following her work with the Stuttgart Ballet on a travel scholarship, former coryphée **Jessica Fyfe** was offered a place in the company.

Former corps de ballet member **Simon Plant** drew critical acclaim in Melbourne and Sydney with his performance in *Filigree and Shadow* as part of the contemporary season *20:21*. Simon looks forward to pursuing dance interests beyond the world of ballet.

The Australian Ballet wishes these two vibrant performers all the very best for the next exciting phase of their careers.

Promotions

As the curtain closed on 2015, The Australian Ballet's Artistic Director David McAllister was pleased to announce six promotions within the company which take effect this week.

The five ranks in The Australian Ballet are Principal Artist, Senior Artist, Soloist, Coryphée and Corps de Ballet.

In 2016, **Brett Chynoweth** and **Robyn Hendricks** join the rank of Senior Artist. 2015 Telstra Ballet Dancer Award winner **Benedicte Bemet** becomes a Soloist, along with **Jarryd Madden** and **Christopher Rodgers-Wilson**. **Jill Ogai** is promoted to the rank of Coryphée.

Looking ahead

The Australian Ballet begins its 2016 season in Brisbane with *Cinderella* in February, before returning to Melbourne in March with contemporary triple bill *Vitesse*, which later tours to Sydney.

Stephen Baynes' classic *Swan Lake* has seasons in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne, as does *Nijinsky*, the masterpiece about the life and tragic death of the famous Ballets Russes star, by world famous choreographer John Neumeier.

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

Prue Vercoe, Public Relations Manager, P: (03) 9669 2778 M: 0428 135 546 E: pruev@australianballet.com.au

Gabrielle Wilson, Senior Publicist P: (02) 9253 5313 M: 0447 749 618 E: gabriellew@australianballet.com.au

NEWS FROM

The Australian Ballet

Sydney-only season *Symphony in C* features the titular work by the great George Balanchine, complemented by a gala of short contemporary pieces including from choreographers within the Company ranks, Alice Topp and Richard House.

Houston Ballet makes a special appearance in Melbourne in June with Stanton Welch's *Romeo and Juliet*, and ending the year is the family favourite *Coppélia*, showing in Melbourne and Sydney.

Tickets to *Cinderella* and *Vitesse* are available at australianballet2016.com.au, or by calling 1300 369 741. Single (non-subscription) tickets to the remaining shows in the season go on sale on 28 January 2016.

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