

SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY
COUNTERMOVE

Works by

Rafael Bonachela

Alexander Ekman

SYDNEY PREVIEWS FROM FEBRUARY 26



Sydney Dance Company bursts into 2016 with a stunning two-part program, juxtaposing works from two renowned contemporary dance visionaries – Sydney Dance Company Artistic Director, Rafael Bonachela, and multi-award winning Swedish choreographer Alexander Ekman.

Bonachela's latest piece, created for the Company's first European co-production, takes its cue from a richly derived electronic soundscape created by Sydney composer Nick Wales.

"This work started and is driven by our sense of what the music should sound like," Bonachela comments. "I worked with Nick as he composed, feeding into his process to capture an emotional sense. I wanted contrast and visceral edges. I was interested in the unfamiliar and the industrial. I wanted to evoke an instinctual connection between people and wanted to draw out the tensions."

Named for the Latin term meaning 'Light and Darkness', *Lux Tenebris* is a 40-minute work featuring the full ensemble of Sydney Dance Company dancers, masterfully lit by award-winning Australian designer Ben Cisterne.

"For me, there was a driving force about how light and darkness affects us - our moods, our memories of specific periods in our lives - the physical sense of light and darkness overlaid with the emotional connections to those contrasting worlds," Bonachela continues.

"Ben's design brings its own evocations. Intimate spaces are distinguished from the broader whole, or bound by the edges of the shadows."

Currently in development in the Sydney Dance Company studios, *Lux Tenebris* will premiere in Sydney on February 29, and tour to Canberra, Melbourne and regional Australia, as part of the *CounterMove* program.

The European premiere of the work, by Dresden Frankfurt Dance Company, will be held in Germany in September 2016.

In *CounterMove*, Bonachela's *Lux Tenebris* is paired with a work from one of Europe's most highly sought-after artists - Swedish dancer turned award-winning choreographer Alexander Ekman's acclaimed and hilarious *Cacti*.

Originally created for the Nederlands Dans Theater 2, *Cacti* sees 16 dancers stand - seemingly trapped - on oversized Scrabble tiles. While a string quartet plays, and spoken recordings give tongue-in-cheek narration of the action, the dancers run, fall, writhe and try to escape their invisible prisons. Eventually - and this is the important bit, they each acquire a cactus. But what does it all mean?

Cacti is one of Ekman's most popular and successful pieces, created early in his career, at the age of 26. Since then he has skyrocketed to celebrity, commissioned by more than 45 leading dance companies around the globe, including Netherlands Dance Theater, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet and Atlanta Ballet, to name just a few.

Described by The Australian as, "An extraordinarily original and vibrant work of dance-theatre - witty, effervescent, playful, surreal and joyously physical," *Cacti* had its Australian premiere in 2013, as part of Sydney Dance Company's triple bill season *De Novo*. The Company has since toured the work to regional venues around the country, leaving a trail of exuberant audiences in its wake.

CounterMove opens at Sydney's Roslyn Packer Theatre Walsh Bay on February 26, ahead of seasons at Canberra Theatre Centre, opening May 19, and Southbank Theatre, Melbourne, opening May 25. Book now for all venues at sydneydancecompany.com/productions/countermove.

The show will also tour to regional New South Wales, regional Queensland, Darwin and regional Western Australia, from June 17 to August 27. See the full list of venues at sydneydancecompany.com/tours.

For further information visit www.sydneydancecompany.com, or follow us at:
www.facebook.com/sydneydanceco
www.twitter.com/sydneydanceco
www.instagram.com/sydneydanceco
www.youtube.com/sydneydancecompany

Follow #SDCCounterMove @SydneyDanceCo on social media.

Lux Tenebris is a co-production of the Dresden Frankfurt Dance Company and Sydney Dance Company, supported by the Nelson Meers Foundation and the Sydney Dance Company Commissioning Fund.

ENDS

Image: In rehearsal for Sydney Dance Company's *Lux Tenebris*. Dancers Bernhard Knauer and Juliette Barton. Photo by Peter Greig.

MEDIA CONTACT

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ABOUT SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY

Sydney Dance Company is Australia's leading contemporary dance company, presenting new works in Sydney, around Australia and internationally, under the Artistic Direction of Rafael Bonachela. Since 1985 the Company has been resident in purpose-built studios at Pier 4 in Sydney's Walsh Bay, minutes from the city's famed Harbour Bridge. Its studios house the largest public dance class program in Australia, attracting nearly 80,000 participants each year. A legendary force in contemporary dance in Australia, Sydney Dance Company will celebrate its 50th year in 2019. More information, www.sydneydancecompany.com.

SEASON INFORMATION

Lux Tenebris

Choreographer: Rafael Bonachela

Composer: Nick Wales

Lighting and stage designer: Benjamin Cisterne

Costume designer: Aleisa Jelbart

Cacti

Choreographer: Alexander Ekman

Composers: Joseph Haydn; Franz Schubert; collaborative composition by Tinta Schmidt von Altenstadt, David Marks, Saskia Viersen, Artur Trajko and Jan Pieter Koch

Writer (voice-over): Spenser Theberge

Stage designers: Alexander Ekman and Thomas Visser

Lighting designer: Thomas Visser

Costume designer: Alexander Ekman

Sydney season

Venue: Roslyn Packer Theatre, Walsh Bay, Sydney

Dates: February 26 to March 12

Bookings: <https://www.roslynpackertheatre.com.au/whats-on/productions/2016/countermove/>

Canberra season

Venue: Canberra Theatre Centre

Dates: May 19 to 21

Bookings: <https://canberratheatrecentre.com.au/show/sydney-dance-company-countermove/>

Melbourne season

Venue: Southbank Theatre, Melbourne

Dates: May 25 to June 4

Bookings: <https://www.southbanktheatre.com.au/countermove>

National tour

Tour dates June 17 – August 27

New South Wales

17 – 18 June, Wollongong

22 June, Orange

25 June, Newcastle

29 June, Port Macquarie

Queensland

2 July, Rockhampton

6 July, Gladstone

9 – 10 July, Cairns

15 – 16 July, Gold Coast

Northern Territory

29 July, Darwin

Western Australia

3 Aug, Geraldton

6 Aug, Mandurah

9 Aug, Albany

13 Aug, Bunbury

New South Wales

20 Aug: Bathurst

24 Aug: Griffith

27 Aug: Dubbo

View full tour details at <http://www.sydneydancecompany.com/productions/countermove/#dates-and-times>

CHOREOGRAPHER BIOS

Rafael Bonachela

Rafael Bonachela was born in Barcelona where he began his early dance training before moving to London, and in 1992 joined the legendary Rambert Dance Company.

He remained with Rambert as a dancer and Associate Choreographer until 2006 at which time he successfully set up the Bonachela Dance Company (BDC) to concentrate on the rapid rise of his choreographic career.

As a choreographer, Rafael has been commissioned to make works for Candoco, George Piper Dances, ITDANSA Danza Contemporanea de Cuba, Transitions Dance Company and Dance Works Rotterdam amongst others.

In 2008, he premiered his first full-length production *360°* for Sydney Dance Company. Less than six months later, he was appointed Artistic Director making headlines around the dance world.

Rafael's vision for the Company embraces a guiding principle that has seen the repertoire grow with the addition of commissioned dance works from Australian and visiting international guest choreographers.

These premiere works are often programmed alongside his own creations, ensuring diversity for audiences and providing much sought after opportunities for his remarkable ensemble of dancers to be exposed to the work of some of the most in-demand choreographers of our time.

Over the past seven years, Rafael has created numerous danceworks for Sydney Dance Company including *we unfold* (2009), *6 Breaths* (2010), *LANDforms* (2011), *2 One Another* (2012), *Project Rameau* (2012), *Emergence* (2013), *Simple Symphony* (2013), *Les Illuminations* (2013), *2 in D Minor* (2014), *Scattered Rhymes* (2014), *Frame of Mind* (2015) and *Variation 10* (2015).

In addition, he has remounted outstanding repertoire from BDC such as *Soledad* and *Irony of Fate* (2010) and *The Land of Yes & The Land of No* (2011).

Rafael's achievements in dance have been widely recognised both within the industry and in the broader community. In 2012 he was listed as one of *Sydney Magazine's* Top 100 Most Influential People for his efforts to popularise dance since taking on the job of Artistic Director with Sydney Dance Company and as curator of Australia's international festival of contemporary dance, Spring Dance at the Sydney Opera House.

In 2013 he was honoured with an Officer's Cross of the Order of Civil Merit by His Majesty the King of Spain, and was named winner of the dance category for The Monthly's 2013 Arts Awards.

Rafael's 2012 work, *2 One Another* has won numerous awards including 'Best Ensemble' (Green Room Awards 2012), 'Outstanding Achievement in Choreography' (Australian Dance Awards 2013), and 'Outstanding Performance by a Company' (Australian Dance Awards 2013).

Most recently, his 2015 production, *Frame of Mind* was awarded 'Best Choreography in a Dance Work' and 'Best Dance Work' at the 2015 Helpmann Awards.

Rafael's internationally recognised talent has seen him work not only with contemporary dance at the highest level but also with artists from popular culture. He embraces the opportunity to collaborate on both dance and cross art-form projects, a philosophy which has seen him work with companies and artists including singers Kylie Minogue, Tina Turner, Sarah Blasko and Katie Noonan; fashion designers Dion Lee and Toni Maticevski; visual artists Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla (for *Revolving Door, 13 Rooms, Kaldor Project*, 2013); and artist Mira Calix (*Inside There Falls, Sydney Festival*, 2015).

With Sydney Dance Company he has also collaborated with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Queensland Symphony Orchestra.

Rafael is currently working on a new piece, *Lux Tenebris*, which will premiere as part of Sydney Dance Company's season of *CounterMove*, opening 29 February 2015 at Roslyn Packer Theatre Walsh Bay, touring nationally until 17 August.

www.sydneycdancecompany.com/people/artistic-director/

Alexander Ekman

Alexander Ekman is an international choreographer/director creating pieces for theatres, opera houses and museums. He also directs films and creates live performances/events in pop up locations around the world.

Ekman is known for his fast paced timing, witty humor and clever transitions. He aims to create work that the majority can relate and connect with. Since 2006 he has devoted his time to creating pieces that both entertain and question the observer. He aims to transform the atmosphere in the audience and to always surprise.

Ekman has created and collaborated with around 45 dance companies worldwide including the Royal Swedish Ballet, Cullberg Ballet, Compañia Nacional de Danza, Goteborg Ballet, Iceland Dance Company, Bern Ballet, Cedar Lake Contemporary Dance, Ballet de l'Opéra du Rhin, The Norwegian National Ballet, Boston Ballet, Royal Ballet of Flanders, Sydney Dance Company, The Royal Ballet of Denmark and Vienna Ballet. He has also created for festivals the French Europa Danse and the Athens International Dance Festival.

In 2005, at the International Choreography Competition of Hannover, Ekman was awarded first prize by the critics, and won second prize with *Swingle Sisters* (one of the ballets from his *Sisters* trilogy).

During 2011 Ekman also worked as a teacher/choreographer at the prestigious Juilliard School in New York City.

Ekman's 2010 work *Cacti* has become a worldwide hit and has been performed by 15 dance companies. The work was nominated for the Dutch Zwaan dance prize in 2010, the National Dance Award (UK) in 2012, and also for the prestigious British Olivier Award. *Cacti* continues to entertain audiences around the world with its important message.

In 2009 Ekman created the dance film *40 Meters Under* for and with Cullberg Ballet, which was broadcasted on national

Swedish television. That autumn he collaborated with the renowned Swedish choreographer Mats Ek on video projections for Ek's play *Håll Plats*. Ekman also created an installation for the Modern Museum in Stockholm with dancers of Cullberg Ballet.

In 2012 he collaborated with Alicia Keys and incorporated her into his work *Tuplet*.

In 2014 Ekman created his own version of *Swan Lake*, a new take on the most famous ballet of them all. *A Swan Lake* received enormous attention worldwide and will return to the Oslo Opera House in 2016. Ekman filled the stage with 6,000 litres of water creating a real lake on stage. *A Swan Lake* is available on DVD and the documentary *Rare Birds* by TM Rives shows the process of how it became possible to create a lake inside an opera house.

Ekman has also collaborated closely with top fashion designer Henrik Vibskov who created the costumes for Ekman's *A Swan Lake*. Vibskov then adapted the choreography for his fall collection, which was shown in Paris and Copenhagen during Fashion Week.

In 2015 Ekman created his own version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Royal Swedish Ballet, which became an instant hit with the audience and critics. In September of that year he received the Swedish Medea Award for "*Inventor and Renewer*".

<http://alexekman.com/>