SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY

COUNTERMOVE
Works by
Rafael Bonachela + Alexander Ekman
SOUTHBANK THEATRE, MELBOURNE
MAY 25 – JUNE 4, 2016

★ ★ ★ ★ *Utterly mesmerising* – **The Guardian**

★ ★ ★ ★½ *A winning combination* – **Limelight Magazine**

★ ★ ★ ★– **Sydney Morning Herald**

Sydney Dance Company returns to Melbourne's Southbank Theatre in May, with a stunning two-part program, *CounterMove.* From multi-award-winning young Swedish choreographer Alexander Ekman, the acclaimed and hilarious *Cacti*; alongside an exhilarating new work from Sydney Dance Company Artistic Director Rafael Bonachela, *Lux Tenebris*, showcasing Australia's finest contemporary dance ensemble at its most poetically fierce.

Originally created for Nederlands Dans Theater 2, *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 as one of Europe's most highly sought-after artists, commissioned by more than 45 leading dance companies around the globe, including Nederlands Dans Theater, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet and Atlanta Ballet.

Described by *The Australian* as, *"Extraordinarily original - witty, playful and joyously physical,"* 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. The question of "What does it all mean?" becomes increasingly irrelevant as audiences laugh out loud with the joy of being entertained.

In *CounterMove,* Ekman's critically acclaimed and clever parody is paired with a new 'utterly mesmerising' *(The Guardian)* 'explosion of movement and power' *(Daily Telegraph)* from Rafael Bonachela.

Named for the Latin term meaning 'Light in Darkness', *Lux Tenebris* takes its cue from a rich industrial-meets-electronic soundscape by Australian composer Nick Wales, in which he juxtaposes one force with another to 'create a musical tug of war between light and the dark'.

Renowned for his unique compositions - a hybrid between classical forms, electronic and popular music - Wales is the wunderkind behind the band CODA as well as a regular collaborator with artists including Sarah Blasko.

In his fifth collaboration with Rafael Bonachela and his sixth with Sydney Dance Company, Wales says he mashed pre-existing musical elements, sketches and field recordings – of Pluto's atmosphere, Monks in Seoul, the sound of beehives, archaic Ethiopian religious processions and fireworks in Lismore. His process involved forming layers of sound, until he created something that he believed in.

'I was driven by the idea that there is an inherent beauty in darkness. Just because something is dark, doesn't mean it is ugly,' Wales says.

Rafael Bonachela adds, 'For me, there was a driving force about how light and darkness affects us all, 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.'

The resulting choreography has been described as 'broodingly eloquent, wild, fierce, mysterious and exhilarating'. Delivered in typically razor-sharp style by Sydney Dance Company's 'extraordinary' 'world-class dancers', *Lux Tenebris* combines with *Cacti* to deliver 'one of the best nights out in town'. *(Limelight Magazine)*

CounterMove opens at Melbourne's Southbank Theatre on May 25. Book early (by May 18) for the chance to win a trip for two to Europe, sydneydancecompany.com/productions/countermove/#win-a-trip-to-europe.

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.

CounterMove premiered in Sydney on February 29. A short Canberra season is scheduled from May 19 to 21. Following the Melbourne season, 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.

Lux Tenebris also marks Sydney Dance Company's first European co-production in its 47-year history, in partnership with the renowned Dresden-Frankfurt Dance Company (formerly The Forsythe Company). The work will have its European premiere in September 2016, performed by the Dresden-Frankfurt Dance Company.

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.

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Image: Sydney Dance Company, *Cacti.* 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

Venue: Southbank Theatre, Melbourne
Dates: May 25 to June 4
Bookings: https://www.southbanktheatre.com.au/countermove

CREDITS

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

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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 latest work, *Lux Tenebris,* premiered as part of Sydney Dance Company's Sydney season of *CounterMove,* at Roslyn Packer Theatre Walsh Bay in February 2016. The work will tour nationally until 17 August.

Lux Tenebris also marks Sydney Dance Company's first European co-production in its 47-year history, in partnership with the renowned Dresden-Frankfurt Dance Company (formerly The Forsythe Company)*.* The work will have its European premiere in September 2016, performed by the Dresden-Frankfurt Dance Company.

www.sydneydancecompany.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/