

MEDIA RELEASE

The Australian Ballet announces an explosive new season, blending timeless classics and contemporary works, including the Australian premiere of the Nijinsky masterpiece, the return of much-loved classics Coppélia, Swan Lake, Romeo and Juliet, and world premiere works by rising ballet stars.

Artistic Director David McAllister and Executive Director Libby Christie today unveiled The Australian Ballet's 2016 season. The year ahead blends treasured masterpieces, comic fairytales and legends of ballet history. The theme of the 2016 program is transformation with a season focused on fantasy, magic and make-believe, celebrating the ballet's ability to transform.

The Ballet's 2016 calendar begins in Brisbane when the Company brings back an encore season of Alexei Ratmansky's acclaimed *Cinderella*. The world's most in-demand classical choreographer has earned rave reviews for his witty, romantic treatment of the classic love story. Audiences can expect vivid, Surrealism-inspired designs in a fantasy land of 1940s glamour. Opening in **February**, Cinderella runs exclusively in Brisbane.

The 2016 triple contemporary bill, Vitesse, brings together three world famous contemporary choreographers at the top of their game: Christopher Wheeldon's work sees dancers hurtle at a head-spinning pace; Jiří Kylián's evokes a haunting and harrowing seascape set to Benjamin Britten's dark Sinfonia da Requiem; William Forsythe promises a ballet that is chic, sleek and dangerous. This explosive new work is a visceral and wild ride of modern dance. Vitesse opens in Melbourne in March and Sydney in April.

The Australian Ballet turns back the clock to a traditional take on the world's most popular ballet. Swan Lake returns to its roots with an encore performance of the Stephen Baynes classic. From the first bars of Tchaikovsky's score, Swan Lake takes audiences to another world. Baynes' timeless ballet combines grand scale with unnerving psychological intimacy. Hugh Colman's designs pit Edwardian splendour against spectral beauty. One of the most ambitious works ever staged by the Company, it was created for The Australian Ballet's 50th anniversary in 2012. The work was commissioned in honour of the Company's first ballet ever performed in 1962. Swan Lake by Stephen Baynes opens its 2016 season in Sydney in April, then Adelaide in May and Melbourne in June

Symphony in C is a parade of bite-size classical and contemporary ballet delights. The mixed bill begins with the black and white symmetry of a George Balanchine extravaganza. The gala lineup to follow is a suite of perfect ballet moments to show the art form at its radiant best. Highlights include the world premiere of two new works by emerging choreographers and rising stars of The Australian Ballet, Alice Topp and Richard House. This work is exclusive to Sydney and opens in April, as the classical counterpoint to Vitesse.

Romance moves centre stage, when Houston Ballet brings the world's most famous love story, Romeo and Juliet, to Melbourne. Artistic Director Stanton Welch, concurrently a Resident Choreographer with The Australian Ballet, is a master of story and spectacle. His La Bayadère won wide acclaim in Sydney and Melbourne in 2014, and now Australian audiences can, for the first time, enjoy his version of the star-crossed lovers' tale. This traditional production, set to Sergei Prokofiev's heartrending music, unfolds in a richly ornate design inspired by Renaissance Italy. Welch's emotionally-charged and sensual choreography shows Houston Ballet at its finest. Romeo and Juliet opens in Melbourne in June.

Arguably the centrepiece of the 2016 program will be a moving tribute to a master. *Nijinsky* is a work inspired by the rise and fall of a ballet legend. A famed Ballets Russes star, Nijinsky changed dance forever. His explosive leap and shockingly sensual choreography brought critics to tears.

This Australian premiere takes audiences inside the mind of a tortured genius. Follow the artist's journey from ecstasy to anguish before his tragic end in an insane asylum. Choreographed by one of the world's most celebrated choreographers, John Neumeier, and created for his company, Hamburg Ballet, this ballet has been hailed as a masterpiece, encapsulating his lifetime passion for and exploration of the Vaslav Nijinsky story. This work recalls the artist's troubled family, his ill-starred romances and the transcendent performances that brought him fame. The story is told through the vivid memories unfolding in the dancer's mind during his last performance at a Swiss hotel. An extravagant masterpiece set against the backdrop of the celebrated Ballet Russes, expect lavish glamour and sensuality. Nijinsky opens in Melbourne in September, Adelaide in October and Sydney in November.

The Australian Ballet season would not be complete without a fairytale spectacle for the whole family. **Coppélia** brims with lively dancing and 19th-century charm. This is comedy, intrigue and fantasy made real as village boy Franz learns why you should never romance a living doll. Set to Delibés' lilting score, the ballet is infused by sorcery, magic and masquerade. The cast is exquisitely dressed by master designer Kristian Fredrikson.

This ballet was lovingly revived by The Australian Ballet's founding Artistic Director Peggy van Praagh and Theatre Director George Ogilvie. The Australian Ballet is delighted to bring back this festive season favourite, which opens in Melbourne in September, and Svdnev in December.



Artistic Director David McAllister said the program is one of the most ambitious yet; world-class in its quality and visionary in its aspiration. 'Ballet has the ability to transform. It creates a special place where time stands still. This year promises a kaleidoscope of magic and fantasy from the historic past to the present. The season ranges from milestone classics, including the genius of John Neumeier's *Nijinsky*, certainly one of the greatest choreographers of all time, to a triple bill of explosive, edgy and athletic movement, including two world premiere works by our own talented dancers. This is a richly dynamic and diverse season which I am proud to present,' McAllister said.

Libby Christie, Executive Director of The Australian Ballet, said, 'The Australian Ballet continues to expand its horizons in 2016. I am delighted to confirm also that on the back of tours to China and America in the past year, we have plans for further overseas travel in 2016. The Company's profile continues to rise both in Australia and on the international dance world stage.

The Australian Ballet will also tour to major regional centres in Australia, and continue its rich program of audience engagement events.

For full season details, visit australianballet2016.com.au.

2016 Season Packages are available from 9am Thursday 24 September in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Founded in 1962, The Australian Ballet is one of the world's leading ballet companies delivering extraordinary performances for over 50 years. A commitment to artistic excellence, a spirited style and a willingness to take risks have defined the company from its earliest days, both onstage and off. The company exists to inspire, delight and challenge audiences through the power and quality of its performances.

In addition to 70 acclaimed dancers, The Australian Ballet employs leaders in injury prevention, dance education, master craftspeople and maintains an orchestra of 62 musicians (Orchestra Victoria) to present upwards of 250 shows and audience engagement events each year. The company tours regularly overseas and has performed to critical acclaim around the world including in New York, Tokyo, London and Paris.

Moving effortlessly between the great classical ballets and new contemporary commissions, the company has a unique Australian style, powered by artistry and athleticism. As The Australian Ballet embarks on a new five-year strategic plan, the Company is poised to reach more audiences than ever before, both at home and overseas.

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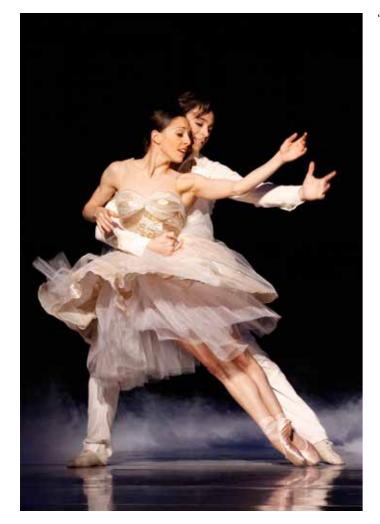
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"A cheeky and charming retelling of the classic love story." ----- HERALD SUN



Everyone's favourite fairytale - with a twist

The Australian Ballet begins its 2016 season with an encore exclusive of *Cinderella* in Brisbane. Created in 2013 by the world's most sought-after choreographer, Alexei Ratmansky, it is already a landmark ballet in the Company's repertoire. After sell-out seasons in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide, Cinderella earned two Australian Dance Awards in 2014.

Set to one of the great ballet scores by Sergei Prokofiev, the charm of Cinderella's story is heightened by vibrant sets and lavish costumes designed by Jérôme Kaplan. This witty treatment of the classic romance brings to life a land of 1940s glamour. The designers drew inspiration from Dior, Schiaparelli, 1940s glamour and Surrealist art.

Cinderella will open in Brisbane, following its international debut in Shanghai during the Company's tour to China in 2015.

Cinderella runs in Brisbane 19 - 24 February.

after you have left the theatre, in the most pleasant of ways." ----- AUSTRALIAN STAGE ONLINE

"An absolute must for any ballet fan, Swan Lake will haunt you long

SWAN LAKE

Luminous beauty. Transcendent love.

Swan Lake returns to its roots with an encore of Stephen Baynes' classic. One of the most ambitious works ever staged by the Company, it was created by the Resident Choreographer to mark its 50th anniversary. This ballet combines grand scale with unnerving psychological intimacy. The work is complemented by Hugh Colman's designs, which pit Edwardian splendour against spectral beauty.

An integral piece of Swan Lake is Tchaikovsky's score, one of ballet's most recognisable pieces of music. An ageless ballet that has enchanted audiences for a century, Swan Lake has special significance for the Company: it was the first ballet ever danced by The Australian Ballet in 1962 at Her Majesty's Theatre in Sydney. Fifty years on, this classic production made history of its own when it opened in 2012. Baynes' ballet is the perfect counterpoint to the Graeme Murphy Swan Lake, commissioned for the Company's 40th anniversary.

Swan Lake runs in Sydney 1 - 20 April, Adelaide 26 - 31 May and Melbourne 7 - 18 June.



as stimulus rather than sleeping pill." ----- FINANCIAL TIMES ON IN THE MIDDLE, SOMEWHAT ELEVATED VITESSE Ballet without borders A visceral and wild ride of modern dance, this triple bill brings together three of the world's most exciting contemporary choreographers for an exhilarating collection of cutting edge dance. Christopher Wheeldon's DGV: Danse à Grande Vitesse[©] is set to a score by celebrated British composer Michael Nyman composed for the inauguration of the north European line of the French Train *á grande vitesse* (or TGV). This work is infused with a sensation of momentum and head-spinning velocity, inspired by the breakneck speed of modern transport. Jiří Kylián's Forgotten Land explores how memories, events and people are lost through time. The work is inspired by a painting of a woman on an isolated beach by German expressionist Edvard Munch, best known for the silent torment of The Scream. Set in a haunting seascape, it evokes the dark isolation of **Benjamin** Britten's score. This is a harrowing picture of lost homelands, lost lovers and lost time. William Forsythe's In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated, is a work which The Guardian says, 'changed ballet forever'. Chic, sleek and dangerous, it sent electric shocks through the ballet elite when it opened at the Opera Garnier in Paris in 1987. The work elevated Forsyth to international acclaim. It also made stars of its dancers, including a young Sylvie Guillem. Raw and ferocious, nine dancers prowl the stage. Deliberately disruptive, formality is discarded in favour of theatricality and primal force. Vitesse runs in Melbourne 11 - 21 March and in Sydney 26 April - 16 May.

"Arms frame faces, limbs circle the body like constellations of stars around a beautiful and radiant sun." ---- THE AGE ON SYMPHONY IN C

SYMPHONY IN C

Ballet to take your breath away

Symphony in C is a whimsical parade of classical and contemporary ballet delights. A playful double bill, it begins with the black and white symmetry and tutu explosion that typifies any good George Balanchine extravaganza. This ballet is a stunning tribute to the golden era of classical dance.

The gala line-up continues with a suite of perfect ballet moments to show the art form at its radiant best. Highlights include the world premiere of two new works by dancers and emerging choreographers in The Australian Ballet, Alice Topp and Richard House. The Company's rising stars of choreography have won critical and popular acclaim for their *Bodytorque* showcase. This is their chance to shine with two widely anticipated new works.

Symphony in C runs exclusively in Sydney 29 April - 14 May, as the classic counterpoint to Vitesse.

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"Here are rigour, purpose, choreography as hope for the future, dance





'Rhythmic sword fights, crowd scenes that vibrate and ravishing partnering that captures the essence of the love story." ---- HOUSTON CHRONICLE

HOUSTON BALLET PRESENTED BY THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET IN

ROMEO & JULIET

In an Australian premiere, Stanton Welch brings his celebrated production of the world's most famous love story to Australia. Artistic Director of Houston Ballet and Resident Choreographer of The Australian Ballet, Welch is a master of spectacle. This is a rare chance to see the Company, dubbed by The New York Times as, 'one of America's best'.

This ballet is brimming with classic swordplay, bawdy humour, romance and tragedy. Set to Sergei Prokofiev's cinematic score, it has drama at its core. The timeless love story unfolds in a rich and lavish design inspired by Renaissance Italy, crafted by internationally acclaimed designer Roberta Guidi di Bagno.

The first Romeo and Juliet presented by Houston Ballet in 30 years, it is worth the wait. Welch's emotionally charged, sensual choreography will show Houston Ballet at its finest.

Romeo and Juliet runs exclusively in Melbourne 30 June - 9 July.

"Kristian Fredrikson's costumes and sets are sumptuous, the dancing is neat and engaging, and children in particular will enjoy the story." ----- SUNDAY HERALD SUN



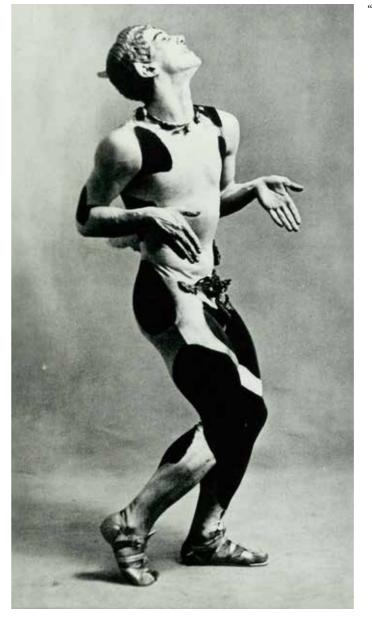
Comedy, intrigue and fantasy made real

Coppélia is a frothy fairytale that has everything a good story ballet should: a touch of magic, a dash of romance and masses of lavish costumes. A tale of sorcery, magic and make-believe, it will transport audiences from the everyday. In this family favourite, Dr Coppelius, an eccentric toy maker, dreams of bringing his mechanical dolls to life, as village boy Franz learns why not to romance living dolls. Designer Kristian Fredrikson teams up with Australian film and theatre luminary **George Ogilvie**, to conjure up a world of sparkle and spectacle.

Coppélia playes an important role in the Company's history: it was performed in the inaugural season in 1962. Its return in 2010 was a fitting tribute to the Company's founding Artistic Director, Dame Peggy van Praagh. Having first revisited Coppélia in 1979, the great choreographer re-invigorated it thirty years later with this joyful and sumptuous production.

Coppélia runs in Melbourne 23 September - 1 October and in Sydney 2 December - 21 December.





AUDIENCE **ENGAGEMENT**

Every year The Australian Ballet provides unique opportunities for audiences to engage in the art form beyond the main stage. Ballet lovers step inside the world of pointe shoes, pirouettes and life-long passions. Popular events include Behind the Scenes sessions, offering an inside look at the daily life of Company dancers; Boys' Day, giving male dance students a chance to learn from the best; Once Upon a Time performances; McAllister in Conversation which sees Artistic Director David McAllister speaking with Company stars about life on and off stage; and Music Talks with Music Director and Chief Conductor Nicolette Fraillon who inspires with insights into each unique ballet score. For 2016, the Company will continue to present these much-loved special events, talks and classes by company artists and artistic staff, and include two new events: the Black Swan Program and In The Middle Program.

"... a stunning homage to a great experimentalist and a compelling theatrical achievement in its own right." ---- CHICAGO TRIBUNE

NIJINSKY

The soaring rise and tragic fall of a ballet legend

Nijinksy is a moving tribute to a modern master. This is the story of the greatest choreographer and male dancer of the 20th century. Russian born, Nijinsky was the male star of the Ballets Russes, celebrated for his gravity-defying leaps, virtuosity and unprecedented onstage intensity. But it was his shockingly sensual choreography that sparked outrage in theatres across Europe. The Russian visionary changed dance forever. A biopic of a legend, this is a searing look into the mind of a genius of our times.

It is also a tragic story of the artist's downward spiral. After a bitter love triangle forced the dancer to split with the Company which made him famous, Nijinsky became increasingly unstable. Deprived of opportunities to dance, he began his dark descent into madness. He would never dance publicly again and spent his final 30 years in and out of mental asylums. This story travels the artist's journey from the heights of ecstasy to the depths of depression. The ballet is told through vivid memories unfolding in the dancer's mind during his last performance at a Swiss hotel.

The intensity of the work is heighten by a backdrop of exotic glamour and extravagance inspired by the Ballets Russes. John Neumeier, director of the Hamburg Ballet, has won international acclaim for this electric and riveting piece of theatre. A premiere work for The Australian Ballet, this ballet is the centrepiece of the 2016 season.

Nijinsky runs in Melbourne 7 - 17 September, in Adelaide 14 - 19 October and in Sydney 11- 28 November.





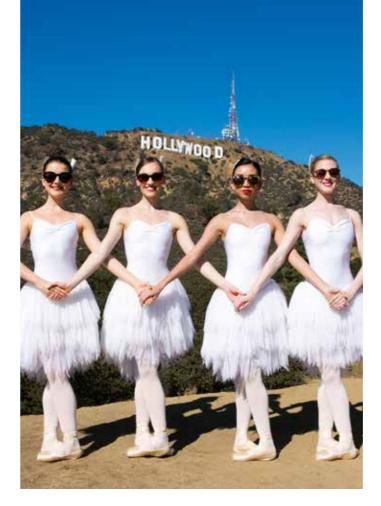
OUR YEAR IN MUSIC

The 2016 season promises a thrilling showcase of music, led by Music Director and Chief Conductor Nicolette Fraillon. From masters Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev to trailblazing composers Britten and Nyman, the scores of 2016 are a vivid journey of anguish to ecstasy.

Arguably the music highlight of the year ahead, contemporary triple bill Vitesse sees edgy realism simmer below the surface. The centrepiece is set to Michael Nyman's MGV (Musique à Grande Vitesse) - the score's bustling vitality mimics the pace of travel. Another 20th-century highlight is Benjamin Britten's Sinfonia da Requiem, Op. 20 (1940), which inspired Jiří Kylián's ballet of mourning and escape. The music, which Britten dedicated to the memory of his parents, takes inspiration from the rugged, storm-battered East Anglian coastline. Completing the line-up, William Forsythe's work is set to a classic piece of 1980s electronica created by the Dutch-born Thom Willems. Expect an edgy, percussive soundscape, reminiscent of the best 1980s synth rock.

Arguably the most ambitious undertaking of 2016: John Neumeier's *Nijinsky*. A musical collage, it is framed around two major works: Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's symphonic poem Scheherazade (movements 1, 3 and 4), and Dmitri Shostakovich's eleventh symphony, subtitled "The Year 1905".

Classical enthusiasts also welcome a return of Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's score for Swan Lake. Today it ranks as a milestone work in the evolution of music for ballet. But at the time it was found undanceable, and arguably the first time that music led ballet in a work's creation. For Symphony in C (1855), Georges Bizet's masterpiece frames Balanchine's ballet of the same name. Crafted when Bizet was only 17, it lay hidden in the library of the Paris Conservatoire until its discovery in 1933. The work reflects Balanchine's famous words: "Making a ballet is a choreographer's way of showing that he understands the music". Sergei Prokofiev's score for Romeo and Juliet has a fascinating backstory, composed under the difficult conditions of life under Stalin and then the Nazi invasion of Russia. While Léo Delibes' Coppélia is noteworthy as the composer's first full-length ballet.



WORLD **BALLET DAY**

World Ballet Day is now a regular fixture for The Australian Ballet calendar year. It worked with the world's most celebrated companies across the globe to mark the inaugural World Ballet Day LIVE on 1 October 2014. Audiences joined in the thousands to watch the live online stream, engaging across social media channels in unprecedented numbers. Streamed online for 20 hours, Australia led the charge, followed by Bolshoi Ballet, The Royal Ballet, The National Ballet of Canada and San Francisco. Across their YouTube channels, a total of 195,430 live plays were recorded in the first day alone. With a Twitter reach in the millions, #worldballetday was the top trending topic in Australia at 11am that day. In October, Australia will again join up with the world's finest to present the World Ballet Day initiative.

ORCHESTRA VICTORIA

This year Orchestra Victoria embarked on its most ambitious regional tour yet, including two inaugural week-long festivals in Hamilton and Bendigo for the first time. The tour was announced as the Orchestra celebrated one year since it became a part of The Australian Ballet. The musicians say the expanded program reflects a renewed sense of excitement among the Orchestra's players since joining the team. The Orchestra's regional tour provided opportunities for residents to meet, learn and even take part in performances through its On the mOVe! program which sees budding musicians mentored by the Orchestra's players.



The Australian Ballet is now one of the leading international ballet

INTERNATIONAL TOURING

Touring productions to theatres across the globe is an important part of The Australian Ballet schedule. The company received standing ovations in New York and Los Angeles in 2014 and is heading to China in October 2015. Performances will take place in Beijing and Shanghai for two of Asia's prestigious festivals; 2015 Dance Festival of the National Center for the Performing Arts and Shanghai International Arts Festival. As The Australian Ballet continues to grow its profile on the world stage, further plans for international travel are in the pipeline. Watch this space for announcements in 2016.





THE DANCERS COMPANY

The Dancers Company will continue to tour regionally in 2016, following the overwhelming success of its regional tour this year across NSW and Victoria. With the support of Principal Partner Telstra, The Australian Ballet's regional touring arm performed 25 shows in a number of venues throughout July and August. Now in its 25th year, The Dancers Company continues to bring the magic of ballet to communities around the country. The program showcases the skills of graduates from The Australian Ballet School, with guest appearances by Company artists.

TELSTRA AWARDS

Telstra and The Australian Ballet have enjoyed one of Australia's longest running arts partnerships, built over thirty years of support. As Principal Partner, Telstra supports emerging dancers through the Telstra Ballet Dancer Award. Australia's most prestigious ballet award, it has catapulted the careers of some of Australia's brightest ballet stars. In 2015 the Awards took ballet as art to a new level, pairing dancer nominees with major Australian artists and designers for unique creative collaborations. The pairing included everyone from graffiti artist Anthony Lister to artist Dion Horstmans whose geometric sculpture was inspired by the line of Ako Kondo's dancing trajectory. The winner will take home a \$20,000 cash prize. The People's Choice Award winner, decided by public vote, will receive \$5,000.





OUT THERE

Celebrating its eleventh anniversary in 2016, Out There - The Australian Ballet in Schools, is The Australian Ballet's flagship education program. It aims to show children that ballet is about much more than tights and tutus. Students aged five to twelve have the chance to learn from the professionals in workshops designed to foster movement skills, promote fitness and encourage engagement with the arts. Thanks to Samsung Electronics Australia, in 2014 it travelled to 86 schools countrywide. In the past decade, it has given 75,000 children across Australia the opportunity to experience dance

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET IN FOCUS The Australian Ballet's artists and artistic staff, past and present, share an openness and love of audiences, the confidence to take risks, a spirited attack and the belief that technique on its own is never enough. Dancing appears as natural to them as walking. They give approximately 200 performances across the country every year - from Petipa to punk, Balanchine to Bodytorque. The Company looks different today, significantly taller and more culturally diverse, just as Australian society is different. Over the years, dancers and teachers have been welcomed from China, England, France, Russia, Spain, Sweden, the USA and the USSR. And new ballet school graduates from Asia, Latin America and European backgrounds are helping to make The Australian Ballet look like a snapshot of contemporary Australia. It is a company attuned to its time and place in the world.

FACTS AND STATISTICS

A snapshot of The Australian Ballet in numbers



THOUSAND

people attended 184 performances worldwide in 2014

people in 12 regional centres experienced the ballet



Instagram followers and rising

5 THOUSAND

Pairs of pointe shoes are used each year



people viewed the World Ballet Day highlights real from 124 countries



students, teachers and community members participated in our education programs



metres of netting used to make over 700 tutus to date



sequins sewn each year



2016 images available to the media



Cinderella Leanne Stojmenov Photo



Vitesse Imogen Chapman Photo Justin Ridler



Romeo and Juliet Karina González and Connor Walsh Photo Amitava Sarkar



Nijinsky

Photo from The Australian Ballet archives



and Daniel Gaudiello Jeff Busby



Symphony in C Valerie Tereshchenko

Photo Justin Ridler



2016 Season Benedicte Bemet Photo Justin Ridler



Coppélia Dimity Azoury Photo Justin Ridler



2016 Season Jade Wood Photo Justin Ridler

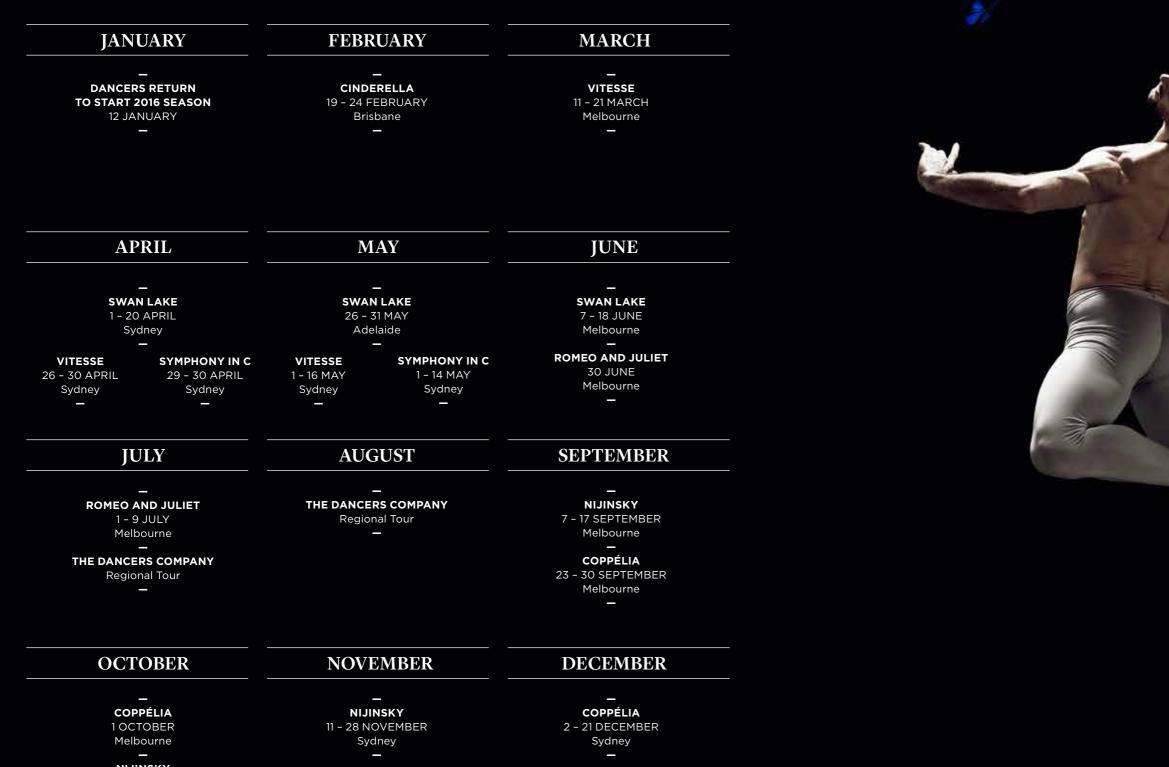


2016 Season Cristiano Martino

Photo Justin Ridler

2016 AT A GLANCE

The Australian Ballet around the country



NIJINSKY 14 - 19 OCTOBER Adelaide

WORLD BALLET DAY 1 OCTOBER



CONTACT US

"Ballet is transformative. The moment our dancers step on stage, they become fearless and fantastic story tellers, where bodies move with witless grace and the wildest tales seem real. Audiences are taken to new worlds of sweeping movement, blossoming colour and spine tingling scores. Ballet creates a special place where time stands still and possibilities flourish."

----- DAVID McALLISTER AM

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