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Positive results in year of great uncertainty

The Australian Ballet reports surplus in 2009 annual report

The Australian Ballet today released its 2009 annual report in Melbourne.

The company's season began inauspiciously at the height of the global recession, amid great uncertainty for the performing arts sector world-wide.

Executive Director Valerie Wilder said she was conscious of the losses and difficulties experienced by peers in the US and the UK and revised budgets and business plans accordingly to protect the company from a more difficult external environment.

Cost reductions were implemented across all artistic and operational areas and revenue generating teams redoubled efforts to minimise losses.

"Given the potential challenges, we are pleased to report a year of success across all aspects of our business," Wilder said.

The Australian Ballet ended the year with an operating surplus on core ballet company activities of \$220,131. All revenue streams over achieved against budget and cost reductions played a significant role in the final result.

Like many non-profit organisations across Australia the company's share portfolio recovered most of the losses reported in 2008. With the inclusion of this significant revaluation and the income from The Primrose Potter Australian Ballet Centre, the consolidated surplus for 2009 is \$7.67 million.

Income from box office, performance and programme fees increased significantly to \$20,154,277 in 2009 from \$17,941,037 in 2008.

In total, 270,331 people saw a performance by The Australian Ballet in 2009, up from 266,067 in 2008. Paid capacity rose considerably to just under 86 percent in 2009, up from 79.7 per cent.

Once again, it was an extremely busy year of activity for the company which presented a total of 182 performances across Australia - 163 mainstage performances, 18 performances by the company's

regional touring arm The Dancers Company, and one free outdoor performance.

In the fourth and final year of Ballets Russes-inspired programming, The Australian Ballet's mainstage season saw several important new commissions come to life: Graeme Murphy's acclaimed reinterpretation of *Firebird* and two new works by leading international choreographers Wayne McGregor and Alexei Ratmansky for the *Concord* programme.

Firebird and other legends was the best performing triple bill recorded since 1986 and Stanton Welch's *The Sleeping Beauty* was sold out in both Sydney and Melbourne. The company's return to Perth after five years was a financial and artistic triumph with Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake* a sell-out with almost 14,000 seats sold for the five-day season of seven performances.

While the company concentrated on performing around Australia in 2009, seven of The Australian Ballet's dancers performed overseas in gala performances across different cities including New York, London, Barcelona, Amsterdam and Tokyo.

Wilder said The Australian Ballet was noticing a resurgence of interest in dance generally across the country. The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2009 report on participation rates in cultural and sporting activities shows that 330,000 young people aged 5-14 take ballet or dance classes around the country.

"We're making a concerted effort to harness this increased love of dance," said Wilder.

"We currently have almost 13,000 Facebook fans - which is double the number of any other major Australian performing arts company - and the company's education programme continues to expand with more than 450 education events presented in 2009," she said.

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