

2 June 2009

Paris Match

MELBOURNE-ONLY TUTU SPECTACULAR
CELEBRATES TIMELESS ELEGANCE AND ULTRAMODERN STYLE



Robyn Hendricks in *Divergence*. Photo Tim Richardson

Inspired by the great moments of French classical ballet, Melbourne's winter masterpiece this June is a tutu spectacular. *Paris Match* opens at the Arts Centre on 24 June 2009 and runs until 4 July.

Featuring the French confection *Suite en blanc* alongside the iconic *Divergence*, *Paris Match* is a double bill celebrating everything chic about French music and dance.

Set to Edouard Lalo's evocative score, *Suite en blanc* is a quintessentially French ballet experience, while the immensely popular *Divergence* returns to Melbourne with a cool elegance and cheeky attitude.

The timeless popularity of *Divergence* was recently cemented when the pas des deux was performed on Network Ten's top rating show *So You Think You Can Dance*. Robert Curran and Leanne Stojmenov received a standing ovation from the show's judges and studio audience. In fact, the public response was so strong the performance was re-televised during the show's Easter special.

Principal Artist Damien Welch will take a different artistic turn as he stages the return of this immensely popular ballet choreographed by his brother Stanton Welch. *Divergence* was especially created for The Australian Ballet, conceived as a result of a wish to show of the depth of talent throughout the company.

This programme presents The Australian Ballet with the perfect opportunity to showcase the stylistic strengths of its dancers at different stages in their careers.

Paris Match is the ideal opportunity for Melbourne audiences – ballet lovers and novices alike – to experience a feast of classical ballet and watch the next generation of dancers shine with their technical prowess and athleticism. Dancers' individualities shine, as do the individuality of these diverse works when the pleasingly elegant *Suite en blanc* teams with the ultramodern noir of *Divergence*.

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Melbourne 24 June – 4 July (12 performances)
State Theatre, the Arts Centre
with Orchestra Victoria
Bookings: australianballet.com.au or 1300 369 741

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Ballet



Suite en blanc

Choreographed by Serge Lifar, *Suite en blanc* is spirited, stylish, playful and romantic. One of the great 'blanc' or 'white' ballets, it's a star-making showpiece for the full company. This unmissable ballet celebrates the high style and hauteur of mid-century Paris.

Suite en blanc was first performed by the Paris Opéra in 1943 and is probably the best known work of the legendary Russian-French choreographer Serge Lifar. Lifar created more than 100 ballets and his work at the Paris Opéra revitalised both the teaching and reputation of ballet in France. Lifar personally staged his *Suite en blanc* for The Australian Ballet in 1981 and The Australian Ballet has since received both international and national acclaim for its brilliant performances, making *Suite en blanc* one of the company's signature pieces.

Divergence

Acclaimed as 'bold', 'gutsy', and 'madly passionate', *Divergence* makes a much-anticipated return to the stage in 2009. Set to Bizet's sublime – and sublimely French – *L'Arlesienne Suite*, *Divergence* is one of The Australian Ballet's most iconic works. Choreographer Stanton Welch pushed classical ballet to its absolute limits. Costume designer Vanessa Leyonhjelm also drove classical ballet well into the 21st century with industrial-strength costumes, recasting tutus in material usually reserved for air-conditioning ducts and structured breastplates from car upholstery.

Choreographer Stanton Welch said of *Divergence*:

"For years I had heard that classical ballet was dying, staggering along like some prehistoric creature, tiredly dragging its old and limited repertoire around. I have never believed this. I was raised on the beauty of classical ballet and have never seen its limitations.

"From myself I tried to bring all my influences of dance and meld them into my own interpretation of the beautiful language dancers speak.

"I wanted to take classical ballet, and *diverge* from it. The first image in the work is what one would consider very traditional classical ballet. From then on, I kept branching off into different paths.

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"I wanted to show the women working as hard as the men. I wanted to show the inside of ballet, to make it look difficult and athletic. I wanted to show the pain and the strength and the difficulty behind what the dancers were doing, rather than hide it." (1994)

Credits**Suite en blanc (1943)**

Choreography Serge Lifar

Music Edouard Lalo

Arranged by Serge Lifar

Divergence (1994)

Choreography Stanton Welch

Music Georges Bizet (*L'Arlesienne suite 1 and 2*)

Set and costume design Vanessa Leyonhjelm
performed with Orchestra Victoria

What the critics say:

"*Suite en blanc* has a series of knockout solos, all of them exceedingly well done." *Sydney Morning Herald*

"The most difficult and dazzling display of classical ballet technique." *Sunday Herald Sun* on **Suite en blanc**

"The Bizet music may be over 100 years old, but **Divergence** is as modern as tomorrow." *Dance Australia*

"The most imaginative and stylish design our dancers have donned in recent times." *Herald Sun* on **Divergence**

In other news:

The Australian Ballet has launched a blog called **Behind Ballet** (www.behindballet.com), a place that explores the not-so-serious side of ballet and unravels the links between dance and other art forms. Dancers and creatives at The Australian Ballet blog about their everyday experiences of dance, while freelance writers from different fields write about ballet through the prism of fashion, film, music, design and literature.

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