

Asia-Pacific CHANNELS

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Newsletter of the World Dance Alliance – Asia Pacific



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Cover

Photographer: Anders Jiras
 Choreographer: HRH Princess Buppha Devi
 Piece: Sovannahong
 Date: October 2008
 Dancers: Left: Hem Linda, Right: Chen Chansoda

Executive reports

The Executive Board of WDA-AP is elected by the membership every three years at the Annual General Meeting, which is held in a different country each year and is hosted by the local WDA chapter. The Executive Board consists of the President, the Vice President, the Secretary, the Treasurer and four regional Vice Presidents, who represent the interests of their regions: East Asia, South-East Asia, South Asia and the Pacific. Members with a specific interest in the affairs of one of these regions should contact the designated Vice President. If members wish to contribute to issues within their own countries, they should contact their Chapter heads.

Roles of Executive Board members

The President guides the organisation to achieve its aims by formulating policy and communicating regularly with Executive Board members, whose activities are vital to the growth and development of WDA-AP. The President represents the organisation and actively participates, by invitation, in Chapter meetings, workshops and celebrations, and communicates twice a year to the general membership through *Asia-Pacific Channels*. The President presides at all Executive Board and Annual General Meetings, and participates in the annual World Dance Alliance Presidents' meeting.

The Vice President represents the organisation and deputises for the President as required, also providing advice on matters of policy and procedure. The Vice President attends all WDA-AP Executive Board and Annual General Meetings, communicates regularly with the President and other Board members, and provides two reports annually for *Asia-Pacific Channels*.

The Treasurer is responsible for the funds of the WDA-AP, invoicing and collecting Chapter subscriptions and lodging funds in a bank approved by the Executive Board to a WDA-AP account. The Treasurer closes the accounts on 31 March each year, and submits them to the AGM with a financial statement after audit.

The Secretary oversees the WDA-AP's election processes, corresponds regularly with the Executive Board, provides it with advice on policies and procedures, and maintains the organisation's records. The Secretary minutes the Annual General Meeting and disseminates them to Chapter Heads and Board members, and provides a summary of AGM outcomes and other procedural information for *Asia-Pacific Channels*.

The Area Vice Presidents represent their regions' interests on the Executive Board and ensure that Chapters in their areas of responsibility are properly represented and supported. They endeavour to establish new country Chapters with advice and support about WDA-AP structures, and are required to provide two reports each year for *Asia-Pacific Channels* about activities of their regions. See p.10 for a list of the countries in each of these regions. The General Secretary works with the three Area Presidents – Asia Pacific, The Americas and Europe. See p.4 for roles and responsibilities.

contributors



President's Message

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Vice President's report

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South-East Asia area report

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South Asia area report

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General Secretary's report

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President's message

Dr Mohd Anis Md Nor

I hope you have had the opportunity of celebrating this year's International Dance Day (IDD) at various levels within your country chapters or within your own dance community. Although IDD was initiated by the International Dance Committee of ITI-UNESCO, the message giver for this year's international dance message, as in previous years, was solicited through the collaborative efforts of the IDC of ITI-UNESCO and WDA. We were very fortunate to have Akram Khan deliver the 2009 International Dance Day Message which speaks out to all of us who use the inherent language of our bodies, the souls of our ancestors and our children, to put into stories our present and dreams of the future through dance. He has dedicated this day to its myriad dialectics and its immense power to express, transform, unite and delight everyone whose world is touched by dance. Indeed Akram Khan is himself a melange of east and west, a mirror image for many of us in the Asia-Pacific. Akram Khan, the acclaimed British choreographer, speaks from his own experience and upbringing. I hope his message will inspire all of us to give our best to share and receive what dance is capable of bringing.

I was privileged to be invited to the celebration of IDD in the Philippines by the Philippines National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA). Held in the city of Dumaguete on the provincial island of Negros Oriental, IDD was celebrated as part of the Dance Xchange Festival and Workshop curated by the Head of the National Committee on Dance of the NCCA, Ms Shirley Halili-Cruz. The NCCA National Dance Committee has been organising the annual dance congress for the last 16 years in celebration of International Dance Day in the Philippines. However, it is only this year that the Committee endeavoured to make it international by inviting international dance groups to participate. Although I was invited as a resource person in the capacity of the President of WDA-AP, the Dance Xchange program and the celebration of IDD were entirely initiated by the NCCA. The IDD event was celebrated with great pomp and grandeur in Dumaguete, through the efforts of the NCCA.

One week later, I was again invited to the Philippines by the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) to participate in an Arts Forum. I was privileged to meet more than 70 local participants who are artistic directors, choreographers, cultural managers and cultural workers from all over the Philippines. The President of WDA Philippines, Prof. Basilio Esteban S. Villaruz, who was also invited to the Arts Forum, was able to share his views with me as we discussed new ideas for including members of WDA Philippines and WDA-AP in future activities under the auspices of the CCP. We hope that the CCP will support the WDA Philippines through its cultural exchange program as much as it supports the growth and development of arts councils all over the country through relevant workshops and seminars. In addition, the CCP has established ties with various international organisations such as the Association of Asia Pacific Performing Arts Centers, the Conseil International des Organisations de Festivals de Folklore et d'Arts Traditionnels (CIOFF), the World Dance Alliance and the International Theater Institute. We hope that the long-time relationship between the

WDA-AP and the Cultural Center of the Philippines will continue to foster new ideas and relationships.

I wish to see WDA India develop similar relationships with key centres of artistic excellence including universities, research institutes and national agencies. This year's Annual General Meeting will set a new record for WDA India as it collaborates with the India Council for Cultural Relations and Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi in curating the WDA-AP Annual General Meeting, the Dance Festival & Workshop, and the International Conference on Dance Research, with the theme Re-Searching Dance. These events, from the 28 November to 1 December 2009, will for the first time bring all of us to India to participate in the WDA-AP regional meeting. Another exciting new event for WDA India, which is part of the WDA AGM, is the Choreolab (21-28 November 2009). In collaboration with Max Muller Bhavan, WDA India is organising a choreolab, with six resident choreographers; three from WDA-AP and three from India.

Behind all these events are the unseen hands of three key people in India – Dr Urmimala Sarkar Munsri, WDA-AP Vice President for South Asia who is working closely with her counterparts in India through the office of Dr Kapila Vatsyayan, President of WDA India, and assisted by Dr Sunil Kothari, the Vice President of WDA India. As we look forward to meeting in India, we wish all the best to our Indian colleagues in their endeavours.

I hope to meet new colleagues from Bangladesh in August when I visit Dhaka to inaugurate the formation of WDA Bangladesh. This will also give me the opportunity to discuss our strategic alliances within WDA-AP through our networks as well as through individual members and their national agencies. Bangladesh is keen to join WDA as much as we are keen to bring a new Chapter from South Asia into our Asia-Pacific family.

Vice President's report

Prof. Yunyu Wang

Working with team members in the WDA-AP has been such a pleasure. The relationship between us is so tight that it feels as if we grew up together. Since returning to Asia from my long absence in the USA, I have discovered the power of dance movement for people, not just in Taiwan but in many countries in Asia. I have enjoyed discussing important dance events with WDA-AP colleagues in Cambodia, the Philippines, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Hong Kong, New Zealand, India and more. Although I've travelled to many countries, never before have I felt the fulfillment of working in dance in such a beautiful way. It feels like a homecoming when I meet with my WDA-AP dance colleagues, or when we email each other day and night.

At the last WDA Presidents' meeting we appointed Cheryl Stock as a central leader for all WDA regions. Together, we will meet in Madison, Wisconsin, USA this May/June to find a way that we can unite three regions: WDA-AP, WDA Americas and WDA Europe to present the best of dance for WDA.

WDA-AP is still the strong vehicle for dance that it was when Carl Wolz established it. Within the region, annual WDA-AP

meetings continue, while the International Young Choreographer Project brings artists together to develop relationships. Free scholarships are offered annually to WDA-AP members to attend TAIPEIDEA and the TNUA Summer Dance Festival. Choreolab is a project that allows young choreographers, dancers and mentor/observers to intermingle and exchange ideas. Starting with *Shifting Sands*, dance publications have flourished in the WDA-AP region.

In 2009 WDA-AP will lead us into a new era of dance – we promise.

South Asia report

Vice President Dr Urmimala Sarkar Munsi

Work on new Chapters in South Asia

Bangladesh: Although the last six months have been turbulent, the dance community from Bangladesh has responded very positively to our suggestions of going forward with the Bangladesh chapter of WDA. At the beginning of August, I will be travelling to Dhaka with WDA-Asia Pacific President Prof. Mohd Anis Md Nor to hold a meeting. There will also be participation from Bangladesh during the WDA event in Delhi in November 2009.

Pakistan: In February I attended a conference in Pakistan where I met a few scholars and theatre performers. I look forward to more communication with them.

South-East Asia report

Vice President Prof. Basilio Esteban S. Villaruz

Malaysia's Tari Festival

Malaysia's Tari Festival is an international dance event held biennially in Kuala Lumpur. Beginning in 1994, the festival is now comparable to the prestigious Indonesian Dance Festival in Jakarta established by Sal Murgiyanto, former WDA president for Indonesia.

This year's festival, held at the Akademi Seni Budaya dan Warisan Kebangsaan (Aswara) from the 14–18 July, is curated by Joseph Gonzales, who is in charge of the dance program at the National Arts Academy.

The festival will host universities offering dance degrees, including the University of Malaya and Aswara, Indonesia's Institut Seni-Jogjakarta, Thailand's Chulalongkorn University, Cambodia's Amrita Performing Arts, Singapore's Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Philippines' De La Salle University, India's Shambhavi School of Dance, South Korea's National University of Arts, Australia's Edith Cowan University, and New Zealand's University of Auckland.

Showcase performances include Aswara graduates; Suhaili Ahmad Kamil; Singapore's Raka Maitra, Apsara Asia and Maya Dance Theatre; India's Priyadarshini Ghosh and Natyanova Performing Arts Center; and the University of the Philippines Dance Company.

The festival continues its academic role by providing workshops and a seminar. This year's speakers are Ralph Buck of Auckland, Maggi Phillips of Australia, Shruti Bandhopadhyay and Vyjayanthi Kashi

of India, Pornrat Darmhung of Thailand, Caren Carino of Singapore, and Glorife Samodio of the Philippines.

International Dance Day Celebrations

Philippine province Negros Oriental and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) hosted an international festival in Dumaguete City as part of International Dance Day. The organiser was the NCCA dance committee headed by Shirley Halili Cruz, also secretary-treasurer of WDA-Philippines.

Participating countries included Malaysia, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Spain, England and the United States. National participants included schools, studios and professional groups, all led by the Bayanihan Philippine Folk Dance Company.

Creation & presentation opportunities

Two of Taiwan's longstanding annual projects continue to serve artists of South East Asia. These projects are the International Young Choreographers Projects (IYCP) in Kaoshiung and the TAIPEIDEA study program in Taipei. Both are open to WDA member countries for learning and experimentation. The rest of Asia and other WDA global centres are most grateful.

East Asia report

Vice President Anna CY Chan

While the activities in the East Asia region have been covered by the Chapter reports, I would like to take this opportunity to report on some of the liaison work in the East Asia region. One of my missions as the newly elected Vice President of East Asia region is to develop our ideas of expanding WDA's networks in China. With the support and advice from President Mohd Anis Md Nor and Vice President Yunyu Wang, I have engaged in dialogue with potential parties and encouraging progress has been made.

Dance development in China has grown tremendously in the past decade and the annual Guangdong Modern Dance Festival (GDMDf) presented by Guangdong Modern Dance Company is an example that signifies this growth. The GDMDf attracts hundreds of young Chinese choreographers and dancers from many different regions in China, as well as international artists from Europe, the USA, Australia, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. Since 2004, they have travelled to Guangzhou to premiere their new works in the Festival and exchange ideas. This unique dance event in China also consists of master classes, Guangdong International Dance Camp and a dance symposium. In the upcoming 6th Guangdong Modern Dance Festival, Hong Kong Dance Alliance has been invited to be one of the co-presenters of the dance symposium Dance In Community from 24–25 July 2009. I have expressed the WDA-AP's goals to the organiser and will try to secure any possible links. More information can be found on GDMDf's website www.gdfestival.cn

The Hong Kong Arts Festival initiated and curated The Asia Pacific Dance Platform at the Fringe Club from the 27–28 February 2009. The platform aims to promote the creativity and dynamism of contemporary dance in the Asia Pacific region. Featuring signature

pieces from six choreographers/dancers: Raewyn Hill's *Be still, my soul* (New Zealand) explores the place of love and loss in the human experience; Yukio Suzuki's *Confronting Silence* (Japan) is steeped in the essence of Japanese Butoh which involves a high level of intensity in the interaction of the dancers' bodies; Namjin Kim's *Story of B* (Korea) illustrates the sadness provoked by social alienation in a rich society; Dick Wong's *B.O.B. Rough Cut* (Hong Kong) explores the body's potential as a tool of expression and questions the way we read the movement of others against that which we imagine; Wen Hui's *Memory* (China) connects strongly to his childhood memories of China through the '60s and '70s; Jecko Siompo's *Tikus-Tikus* (Indonesia) expresses Jecko's love for his native land by showcasing rhythmical steps from Papua folk and tribal dance with gestures and movements from everyday life. This platform also included a series of workshops with university and high school students and discussions with presenters, dance professionals and dance critics, creating a synergy that promoted the awareness and appreciation of contemporary dance in Hong Kong. Artists who are interested in this project may visit www.hk.artsfestival.org/en

Thanks to Cheryl Stock, our new WDA General Secretary who generated a fruitful discussion with Hae-Shik Kim, President of WDA Korea and Yang Sook Cho, General Secretary of WDA Korea. Cheryl has discussed with WDA Korea the possibility of having our next WDA-AP event in Korea in 2010, and we look forward to the update from our Korea Chapter.

With the continued effort from our Taiwan Chapter, the International Asia Young Choreographer Project and TAPEIDEA will again take place in Taiwan from July to August. These two projects truly benefit and support young choreographers and dancers and reconfirm the WDA mission. Thanks to Yunyu and Suling for your wonderful organisation.

General Secretary's report

Dr Cheryl Stock

This is the first of what will be regular updates from my new position as General Secretary of World Dance Alliance, a great honour and privilege, and one in which I will strive to serve the organisation well and be of service to you all. This position was proposed at the Presidents' Meeting of the Global Summit in Brisbane (10/7/08) by Nanette Hassall (Chair of WDA-AP Creation and Presentation Network). She suggested considering 'appointing an over-arching person who could assist in driving the whole of the organisation as an "aid" to the presidents, and moving it forward with contacts and networks' (minutes of 2008 Presidents' Meeting). Adrienne Kaeppler (President of WDA-Americas) agreed that 'the three Presidents definitely needed a co-ordinating person who was above regional interests and could deal at an international level with other organisations such as CID, make recommendations about structural issues such as constitutional conformity for WDA regions, improve communication between regions, etc' (minutes of 2008 Presidents' Meeting). After discussion, a resolution was unanimously carried 'that the position of a secretary-general be created as someone who connects the presidents' with a second resolution, also carried unanimously, 'that Cheryl Stock be invited to undertake this position'.

After much thought and knowing that I would receive support and wise counsel from my WDA colleagues, I agreed to take on the position from February 2009. A duty statement was drawn up and will be discussed and ratified at the forthcoming Presidents' Meeting in Madison, Wisconsin, on 31 May and 1 June. Whilst it is understood that the three regions have cultural differences in carrying out the mission and goals of WDA set in place by founder Carl Wolz, it was also agreed that in order for Carl's vision to continue, we needed to align our regional constitutions and put in place similar policies and procedures across the regions (including election procedures), briefings on roles and responsibilities for incoming Board members and new strategies to attract, increase and support our membership worldwide.

Accordingly, my first duty is to draw up an agenda for the Presidents' Meeting and prepare documentation from the extensive WDA archives in order to assist the WDA executive deliberations, and to use these documents, created and modified over the years, as the basis for formalising our structures and finding a way forward that will suit the current climate. This will include updating ways of improving WDA's visibility and connecting our members, within regions and across regions, and to build relationships with similar existing international dance/arts organisations to ensure WDA is truly global in its reach. These are challenging tasks and will not be easy to achieve. But with your help and input, we can all move forward together.

It is therefore most apt that the WDA-Americas meeting, festival and conference is entitled 'What Moves Us'. Hosted by Jin-Wen Yu, Chair of the dance program at the University of Wisconsin, the 2009 WDA-Americas General Assembly (May 27 to 1 June) consists of performances, choreographic projects, scholarly papers and panels, lecture/demonstrations and master classes. A report on this event will be included in the next *Channels*. I look forward to meeting up with as many of you as possible in New Delhi in November for the 2009 WDA-AP meeting.



Network reports

The World Dance Alliance works through five Networks, based on specific areas of interest and embracing the mandate of the organisation. Each of the networks has a chairperson and co-chair who co-ordinate activities to advance the issues raised by these special interest groups. These networks may also be duplicated in each chapter.

The positions of Network Chairs and co-chairs are not subject to election, but nominations may be received by the President for discussion and negotiation at the AGM.

Network Chairs initiate and drive the work of special interest groups within the WDA-AP and provide two reports annually on their activities for *Asia-Pacific Channels*.

About the Networks

The Creation & Presentation Network includes choreographers; directors; performers; costume, lighting and set designers, composers, dramaturges, filmmakers and any others who collaborate in the creation of dance. The Creation & Presentation network provides opportunities for choreographic development, networking and cultural exchange.

The Education & Training Network ranges from the formal training of dance professionals (performers, choreographers, teachers, arts administrators, writers, researchers, notators, dance scientists) to dance education and appreciation. It covers public and private schools and studios, cultural and recreational groups, senior citizens and general audiences. The Education & Training network provides a forum for professional exchange to improve dance

curriculum content and delivery, and opportunities for sharing information and resources.

The Management & Promotion Network includes artistic directors, impresarios, presenters, agents, producers and company managers. The Management & Promotion network focuses on the programming, dissemination, advocacy and administrative aspects of the dance community.

The Research & Documentation Network includes historians, anthropologists, performers, ethnographers, notators, librarians, educators, archivists, theorists, critics, videographers, photographers, choreographers and filmmakers. The Research & Documentation network promotes dialogue and identifies, supports and initiates projects that preserve dance's heritage through conferences, print and online publications.

The Status & Welfare Network includes physicians, lawyers, dancers, dance scientists, arts policy makers, arts administrators, psychologists, physiotherapists, mental health professionals and financial planners. The Status & Welfare network identifies and advocates the interests of dance professionals and their legal, economic, health and societal status.

Education & Training

Co-chairs Dr Ralph Buck and Jeff Meiners

In the past six months we have focused our energy on building the relationship between WDA and the World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE). The WAAE members include:

- The International Drama/Theatre and Education Association
- The International Society for Music Education
- The International Society for Education through Art
- The World Dance Alliance

The WAAE aims to draw arts educators together in order to build integrated strategies that inform international policy agendas and also to profile arts as a means to critically respond to global issues.

The WAAE is currently organising a summit in Newcastle, UK (31 October–2 November 2009) entitled: *Towards a Paradigm of Creative Education for the 21st Century*. Here, specific groups of arts educators and strategists will create a joint declaration for the 2010 UNESCO World Conference in Arts Education in Seoul. Specifically, a five-year action plan will be devised around the strategic focus areas of Research, Networking and Advocacy. This builds upon the contribution of WDA–AP at the WAAE summit in Taipei 2008.

During the second half of 2009 we will consult with diverse members of the dance education community. These conversations will help build an understanding of the dance education community's concerns and visions that will then help shape a global arts education strategy.

Management & Promotion

Co-chairs Fred Frumberg and Suon Bun Rith

Our attempt at implementing a workshop on fundraising in Cambodia is postponed yet again. We submitted a proposal to the Asian Cultural Council in New York. Though they were unable to give us a firm answer before their next board meeting in mid May 2009, we were getting clear indications that this proposal did not have a good chance for funding and that I should be focusing on raising funds that would contribute to Amrita Performing Arts' current mission to build a sustainable platform of Cambodian contemporary dance. All of our current donors are aware of Amrita's rather precarious state since the Rockefeller Foundation ceased activities in the SE Asian cultural sector and rightfully suggest that we need to focus all of our efforts on raising funds to support our current plans. There are absolutely no Cambodian institutions that would support a WDA workshop of this nature, even through in-kind assistance, so we are completely at the mercy of outside means to realise this project.

Given our current circumstances, we feel it best to combine efforts with another chapter to develop and implement projects for this network. Marcus Hughes of Ausdance Queensland has generously offered to collaborate with us and take on a large portion of responsibilities until the topic can be further discussed in Delhi. In the meantime, Urmimala Sarkar Munsri is working with us to find other solutions to keep the momentum going for the fundraising workshop. The Rabindra Bharati University in Kolkata is showing interest in this initiative and we will continue to update you as these various efforts are further developed.

Research & Documentation

Co-chairs Dr Stephanie Burridge and Dr Urmimala Sarkar

Our recent efforts have been mainly directed towards initiating a WDA journal. As we reported to the Global Summit meeting in Brisbane 2008, we have had ongoing dialogue with the publisher Routledge, and sent them a lengthy proposal with possible names of contributors for the journal. At this point, there has still been no confirmation of their interest and we have decided to seek out other possible sources to produce a WDA journal.

During these negotiations, an unexpected spin-off occurred – Routledge in Asia expressed an interest in producing a series of books on Asian dance. The concept for the series reflects that of *Shifting Sands: Dance in Asia and the Pacific* where there is a mix of essays from scholars, journalists, commentators and artists; artists' essays and profiles, and about 25 black and white photos. Some WDA members might remember that in Brisbane, we had a show of hands from countries that were interested in participating in this project – I also mentioned that the first book on Cambodian dance was in process. I can now confirm that Routledge has agreed to publish the series with distribution around the region, Europe and the USA. The series will continue over the next 3–5 years with several countries working concurrently – at this point, India, Taiwan and Malaysia have proposed that they be the next titles in the series. This is currently in the early stages of planning so VPs, Network and Chapter heads please let us know if you would like to participate – it is a great opportunity for WDA members to be involved; however contributors can also come from a diversity of fields. To give an idea of the scope and experience of the authors, and to precede the launch of our first book in the series in India at WDA 2009, the Introduction of *Beyond the Apsara: Celebrating Dance in Cambodia* follows on page 8.

Status & Welfare

Co-chairs Lesley Graham
and Dr Tania Kopytko

The aim of this working group is to promote information and knowledge which will improve the working conditions and status of dance people in the region and promote the use and practice of dance as a tool for development. The committee is working on the first strategy which is to scope and collect all the available relevant information in order that it can be placed on the central WDA-AP website. This would act as a type of information portal by linking WDA-AP to a wide variety of useful resources, research and information.

To that end we ask members of WDA-AP to forward to Lesley and Tania any links to current online documents that would provide information on the following areas

- Legal – insurance, copyright, contracts, dispute resolution
- Economic – salary, international rates of pay, career pathways
- Health – safe dance practice, physiotherapists
- Social status – equity, social position/cultural difference, cultural protocols, code of ethics
- Community dance – status of dance in community work, status of dance in societies, examples of projects where dance is used for community development
- Research which supports dance development.

The Status and Welfare strategy is

- **Stage One:** scope the information that already exists in the above categories e.g. on existing international websites, research, international rates of pay, career pathways, cultural protocols, welfare issues, and investigate how this information can be presented e.g. a portal type (links) site on WDA-AP website.
- **Stage Two:** research WDA-AP people about issues in their areas.
- **Stage Three:** on the basis of research, develop training workshops and resources for WDA-AP based on identified needs.

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Creation & Presentation

Choreolab at the WDA India Event

This year's Choreolab will be presented by WDA India in conjunction with the conference and AGM, to be held in New Delhi in November (see p.30 for details).

It is being organised in collaboration with Max Muller Bhawan, where the Choreolab will be held. The structure will involve six choreographers who will interact with one another over seven days, from 21-27 November, culminating in an interactive presentation on the evening of 28 November. The group of six choreographers will comprise one each from Taiwan, Cambodia and Germany, and three from India. There will also be two facilitators, one from an Asia-Pacific country, and the other from India, who will record, facilitate and moderate this process.

The Choreolab will not have student participants, but will provide an opportunity for an intense period of choreographic sharing between the choreographers.

The chosen choreographers will provide in advance a schedule for a day's work with the others, and they will then be given one whole day to share their own work and their specific ways of developing and engaging with choreography. Each choreographer will also lead their day's work with the others.

The seventh day will be kept for the group to work together if they want, and to plan an evening of presentation for 28 November, which is also the first night of the conference. All conference delegates will be at the Max Muller Bhawan, and each choreographer will have about eight minutes to show some work of their own, as well as working together and discussing their experience of the past seven days.

The Choreolab has now become an important part of the Creation & Presentation Network's activities at annual WDA-AP events. Thanks to WDA India for hosting this unique version of the Choreolab in 2009.



Compass Ensemble performing *Our Feelings* by choreographer Chey Chankethya, February 2008. Photographer: Kang Rithisal

Beyond the Apsara: Celebrating Dance in Cambodia

Editors: Stephanie Burridge
and Fred Frumberg

Introduction

Beyond the Apsara: Celebrating Dance in Cambodia celebrates and documents the resurgence of dance in Cambodia after the fall of the Khmer Rouge. It honours not only the remarkable commitment of the few remaining masters of the art of dance who are reviving and preserving the famous classical dances, but also the courage and resolution of a generation of young artists who are imaginatively pursuing their passion to forge new paths in contemporary dance in Cambodia. All are re-building from the ashes of war and feel the weight of responsibility of this enormous task. The senior artists are researching and reviving the traditional dances, teaching at the acclaimed Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh and boldly mentoring young dancers as they embrace contemporary influences coming from both the east and the west. Many of the artists in Cambodia perished during the infamous Pol Pot regime – those left now feel the urgency to pass on the traditional classical dances to their young students before

they themselves pass on. Khmer classical dance dates from between the 1st and 6th centuries – during the period of Angkor; dancers of the Royal Ballet were considered 'servants of gods' and the link between heaven and earth. In 2003, Cambodian classical dance was awarded World Heritage Status by UNESCO – this confirmed the importance, and perhaps the burden, of the task of preservation.

This volume includes contributions from the royal family, eminent writers and commentators, and the dancers themselves, in a collection of interviews. It begins with a historical perspective from Her Royal Highness Princess Norodom Buppha Devi – this chapter, 'Royal Dances of Cambodia – Revival and Preservation', includes a review of *Sovannahong*, choreographed by Her Royal Highness. In 1955 the Princess's grandmother, Her Majesty Queen Sisowath Kossamak Neary Roth SereyVaddhana, created the original version of this work but it was never completed. Only fragments existed, but with the support of Amrita Performing Arts and

funding from the Rockefeller Foundation the research and reconstruction has allowed the full work to come to life for the first time in July 2008. Essays by Hun Pen, *I am a Cambodian Classical Dancer: A Personal Story* and Chey Chankethya, *Dance Education in Cambodia* give us insights into the next generations' experiences and perspectives on the future direction of performance and education in Cambodia. Toni Shapiro-Phim's chapter, *Don't Even Think About Having Me* gives some background to the harsh realities of pursuing a dance career for women in Cambodia. An eminent writer on dance and human rights, Toni has lived in and visited Cambodia over many years and her observations come from interviews and discussions combined with years of research and investigation.

Probably second only to the temples of Angkor Wat in Cambodia's cultural hierarchy are the delicate *Apsara* dances for women – both integral to Cambodia's well-trodden tourist trail to. The dancers are also part of the reconstruction and revival program; however, contrary to popular belief, they have a comparatively recent history. Inspired by temple engravings, in 1962 the late Queen Kossamak created the dance for her granddaughter Princess Buppha Devi, the Royal Ballet's prima ballerina of the time. These dancers also captured the imagination of the French artist Auguste Rodin, who made numerous sketches of them when they visited France in 1906. French writer and diplomat Thierry Bayle recounts Rodin's enchantment with the dancers and his sketches. Likewise Pornrat Damrhung's chapter *Cambodians Dancing across Borders – Three Contemporary Examples* and Peter Chin's, *Transmission of the Invisible: Form and Essence* are concerned with cultural exchange, exploration of cultural heritage and perceptions of this heritage across borders. They tell us about projects between Cambodian and non-Cambodian artists working together on collaborative projects.

One of the most extraordinary essays comes from Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, a member of the first generation of dancers to graduate from the Royal University of Fine Arts. After the fall of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge, she toured nationally and internationally with the school's ensemble and then immigrated to Southern California

in 1991, where she studied and taught at UCLA. An award-winning choreographer, she has returned to Cambodia to create her own company and academy. While often exploring themes and scenarios that traverse art forms, time and place – for example her interpretations of Shakespeare's *Othello* and Mozart's *The Magic Flute* – her innovative works draw on her classical dance heritage. Often working against the odds and certainly outside the mainstream, *Dancing Off Centre* is a personal story of supreme artistry and the discipline, courage and focus required to work as an independent artist in Cambodia. The chapters conclude with overviews of dance in the region and concluding remarks about future directions of dance by the editors.

The artists' interviews began by talking to groups of young dancers sitting around the table at the Amrita Performing Arts headquarters in Phnom Penh. For the dancers, this was an exciting moment. They had an opportunity to write down their personal stories, experiences and ideas for new directions for dance in Cambodia. There is tension in this statement. It is perhaps also a metaphor for the whole country – moving forward from such a horrific recent past is not easy. Cambodian dancers work within the context of tradition, cultural heritage, spiritual and family values and they study within a 'master teacher' system. Their dance traditions include folk, court and ritual dancers that have an essential function in the society. Although each of them considers it a great privilege to perform in classical ballets, they also want to embrace other directions, such as contemporary dance. While respecting their teachers and rich cultural heritage, they have a thirst to learn more about contemporary dance, not only as a physical form but also as a way of expressing their feelings about the present and the past – to move freely to new rhythms and pulses of the present time. Dancers like Mok Sokhom, Chumvan Sodhachiv (Belle), Hang Borin and Sam Sathya have had extensive international performing experience, participating in festivals and events in Canada, Japan, Korea, Norway, the UK, Australia and beyond. They want to be part of the next wave of choreographers and dancers in Cambodia – to be creative, build on tradition and join the evolution of new dance in the Asian region. Their thoughts

and feelings are revealed in these very personal essays.

All around the city of Phnom Penh there are monuments and reminders of the Killing Fields. Toul Sleng Museum is a place full of dark tragedy. Photographs of the executed, many of them children, line the walls of the old school building that has been left in tact as a reminder of the Pol Pot reign of terror. Nearly 2 million Cambodians perished through the brutal killings or died of starvation and disease during the Khmer Rouge years. Some of the senior master teachers we are talking to like Proeung Chhieng, Menh Kossony and Soth Somaly, survived these dark times and many of the young lost family members. Amongst the poverty of the country and the memories, the dancers, both young and old, journey towards the future while respecting and honoring the past. *Beyond the Apsara: Celebrating Dance in Cambodia* shares and documents their journey.

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Chapter reports

About the WDA Chapters

Countries or defined geographical areas within a regional centre may become Chapter members, providing information and coordinating the dance activities within their boundaries. They are important points in regional and global communication and networking. WDA Chapters may be represented by existing organisations.

These Chapters propose and implement projects, which address not only the general goals of WDA and WDA Asia-Pacific, but also the specific needs of the local dance community.

The WDA-AP Chapters

East Asia: Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong

South-East Asia: Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Brunei, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Vietnam

South Asia: India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives

Pacific: Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, Hawaii, Samoa, French Polynesia, Palau, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands

Chapter heads

Chapter heads provide regular WDA-AP information to members in their countries, informing them of WDA-AP events, opportunities and the biennial elections. They maintain a database of their members, and regularly communicate with the President and their Area Vice President, as well as providing (or commissioning) two Chapter reports annually for *Asia-Pacific Channels*.

Contribute to Channels

If you would like to contribute information about dance activities in your country please contact your region's Vice President (see back cover).

Aotearoa, New Zealand

by Tania Kopytko



The New Zealand Dance Industry Strategy, launched September 2008

Kia ora and greetings to the region from Aotearoa New Zealand and DANZ!

2009 is the second year of the DANZ national workshop program, focusing on best practice for freelance teaching and studio work, dance health and wellbeing, understanding dance in the school curriculum and content for dance artists working in schools. The DANZ mentoring program continues to attract a good variety of applications. The program aims to increase skill and confidence in creating and producing dance and to support career pathways. DANZ is running forums in regional areas in order to stimulate formation of local dance networks, strengthen links and promote DANZ services. This is essential as DANZ only has a Wellington and an Auckland office. It is an opportunity to invite a wider 'audience' (including recreation, sports and arts officers) to interact with dance in their local areas.

Work continues on the New Zealand Dance Industry Strategy with the publication on the website of *Voices from the Forums* – a snapshot of the collected thoughts of our dance people in 2008. The views expressed will no doubt have relevancy for other dance communities in our region. This can be viewed at www.danz.org.nz/strategy_voices.php

The third part of the strategic process, the *Blueprint for Action*, will soon be published on the website for

consultation. This document describes how we can resolve some of the issues and lists actions needed, from both local and national levels, with priorities and timelines. The success of the NZ Dance Industry Strategy relies on proactive collaboration and involvement – without this the dance industry will not have the capacity to undertake all this work, but with commitment from the whole industry, we could see a major change in New Zealand dance. Because a strategy of this size is only useful if people and organisations know how they can engage and who their partners will be, a guide for advocating for dance is also in development.

At the height of this desire for dance development in New Zealand we are facing an economic downturn that is affecting arts sponsorship. Festivals, which are major supporters for new dance in New Zealand, have nearly all experienced a drop in grant moneys and sponsorship. The entrepreneurship of festival directors and boards will be tested and dance groups and performances will also have to be innovative and resourceful during this period. This may be the time to develop new audiences, partnerships and approaches to dance performance. It is also a time when the public needs dance for wellbeing and morale. The 'thinking outside the square' collaboration and integrated action called for in the Dance Strategy is needed now.

Australia

by Julie Dyson



The Elephant House Project, a partnership with Lingalayam Dance Company and Sutra Dance Theatre. Above: Dr Alex Day (also below), Anandavalli, Ramli Ibrahim. Photographer: Sivarajah Natarajan.



The Australian chapter of WDA–AP, Ausdance, is currently working on a number of major projects, including the Australian Dance Awards, an advocacy campaign for the arts in education and the Indigenous dance program 'Treading the Pathways'. Ausdance is also assisting with setting new directions for the SCOPE (securing career opportunities and professional employment) project for dancers, physical theatre and circus artists.

There has been much discussion in Australia about the global economic crisis and the long and short-term impacts it will have on dance and the arts. Possible long-term outcomes could include a drop in box office revenue, less government funding, more unemployment (and a change in employment patterns), less sponsorship investment and fewer philanthropic donations, all of which will lead to uncertainty for companies and independent artists. The short-term impact is still unknown, but it is likely that private dance schools will be the first to suffer, with lower enrolments and student withdrawals. The large stimulus packages recently announced by the Government did not specifically target the arts.

Australian Dance Awards

More than 500 people Australia-wide nominated their favourite companies, choreographers, dancers, educators and advocates for the 2009 Australian Dance Awards, to be presented by Ausdance Victoria at the State Theatre in Melbourne on 7 June. A panel of respected dance practitioners and writers selected a shortlist of four people in each category; panel members viewed DVDs from all States and Territories to come up with their shortlist. The Award for Lifetime Achievement was announced ahead of the Awards ceremony, this year going to celebrated Australian ballerina Lucette Aldous. A range of Australia's best companies and independent artists will entertain the audience at the Awards ceremony in June.

SCOPE

To broaden the range of options facing Australian dancers, the Australia Council, Ausdance and the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) created the SCOPE initiative in 2007. Since then more than 60 dancers have benefited from one-to-one career guidance and skills development opportunities, with the program this year broadening its reach beyond dance to physical theatre and circus. It will eventually include musicians and visual artists, but in the meantime, the SCOPE board has been working to create a viable organisation beyond June 30 this year, when the current partnership arrangements with the ASC expire. New applications for SCOPE participants have just closed and results will be announced in June.

National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE)

Ausdance led the National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) in a successful campaign to have the visual and performing arts included in the national curriculum. NAAE represents the disciplines of dance, drama, media, music and visual arts education, and it supported its case by presenting international research evidence proving the value of an arts rich education to children's cognitive development. The NAAE will advise on ways that the development of a national arts curriculum for all Australian students can retain each art form's integrity and be taught sequentially.

Dance research

A recent report entitled *Dancing between diversity and consistency: refining assessment of postgraduate studies in dance*, outlines the researchers' perspective on the examination of creative arts degrees, specifically those involving practice at the postgraduate level. For more information see p. 29.

Australian Youth Dance Festival (AYDF)

The sixth AYDF was held in Mandurah, south of Perth, in April, facilitated and presented by Ausdance WA. The AYDF hosted workshops, classes, performances and professional

development for teachers, as well as two forums which examined the role of youth dance practice in the arts and communities. The artistic directors of youth dance companies reaffirmed the definition of youth dance as a professional practice that

- is driven by the interests of young people
- values the process of creating work equally with the product created
- works in a participatory, collaborative, accessible and inclusive way to create new dance works
- offers immediate role modelling, mentoring and nurturing for young people
- works with young people who have a diverse range of skills, experiences and backgrounds
- employs highly skilled arts practitioners to work with young people within a professional environment
- is strongly connected to the communities in which it operates.

The Elephant House Project

The Elephant House Project was conceived and delivered in Sydney by the Lingalayam Dance Company in partnership with Sutra Dance Theatre, Critical Path, Macquarie University and the Casula Powerhouse. It was designed as a project of experimentation, collaboration, dialogue and performance, with four pools of activity:

- Creative development collaboration for 'Drowning in Rasa'. Lingalayam Dance Company (Australia) with Sutra Dance Theatre (Malaysia) and Alex Dea (Indonesia).
- A preview of the work to emerge from the creative development at Casula Powerhouse.
- A 3-day workshop at Critical Path involving artists of Lingalayam, Sutra and several independent choreographers across a range of practices.
- A symposium at Macquarie University with artistic and scholarly perspectives about current dance and music practice, lineage and transmission of Indian and other traditions.

Key artists included dancers Ramli Ibrahim (Malaysia), Anandavalli (Australia) and composer Dr Alex Dea (Indonesia), plus many other artists and academics.

The project has now toured to other centres in the Asia Pacific region, and has been highly successful in creating dynamic dialogue and generating new connections. It stimulated opportunities for further research and art making, and enabled a shared and deeper understanding of the dance and music of India.

See <http://rasaunmasked.wordpress.com/> for more information about the project, which was assisted by Arts NSW and the Australia Council.

Treading the Pathways

Ausdance and the National Indigenous Dance Co-ordinator, Marilyn Miller, are now looking to extend this very successful program beyond the expiration of its funding agreement with the Australia Council in February 2010. We have been invited by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board to prepare a business plan for three-year funding, which would enable the project to continue its work with the artists who attended Creating Pathways in 2005. Their ambitions are still the driving force for the 'Treading' project, but long-term funding certainty and the continued development of infrastructure for professional Indigenous dance are vital to achieving further outcomes.

2009 International Young Choreographers program

Once again Australia had the opportunity to recommend a young choreographer from Australia for this annual choreographic development program supported by the Taiwan National University of the Arts. Cadi McCarthy – a young Canberra choreographer who has recently been appointed to the position of artistic director of Buzz Dance Theatre in Perth – was chosen by the selection panel to represent Australia, and she will travel to Taiwan for a month in July to begin her choreographic development with Taiwanese students from Kaohsiung High School.

Cambodia

by Fred Frumberg



Khmeropédies II, 27 March 2009
Choreographer: Emmanuèle Phuon
Top: dancers Penh Chumnit and Hem Linda
Rap singer: Vy Chamroeun
Bottom: dancers Phon Sopheap and Chey Chankethya
Photographer: Anders Jiras

The contemporary work we have implemented to date grew out of highly effective collaborations with artists from the Mekong and Southeast Asia region. The resulting works have been strongly rooted in the traditions of their classical training. As we continue to advance, it has become clear that Cambodian dancers need more intensive training in various forms of international contemporary technique and expression. To that end, we are currently developing a number of workshops and exchange programs with colleagues throughout the region. We are working with fourteen young Cambodian artists to form a collective that will help nurture this work and slowly begin to develop a body of contemporary dance that can be toured internationally, eventually helping to sustain a more full-time troupe.

On 27 March 2009 we premiered *Khmeropédies II*, choreographed by French Khmer artist Emmanuèle Phuon. Most of our experiments in contemporary dance have been performed outside of Cambodia. When we present the works in Phnom Penh, it is to a select, invited audience. This was our first attempt at a full-blown PR campaign resulting in a very full house with a cross range of dance fans, young and old, foreign and local. The reaction was very enthusiastic, validating our efforts and leading us all to believe that Cambodia might be ready for contemporary dance after all! As one audience member commented, 'I was not sitting there having to think "This is good for me", but was actually really enjoying it'.

The work is about the dialogue between one older teacher rooted in traditions and her three young students who are curious and want to experiment with other techniques. The choreographer took Khmer classical dance vocabulary and changed its context, applying it in different ways and to different themes, and pushing it as far as possible from its original form while keeping it recognisable. We pushed the envelope as far as we dared, including the commissioning of Cambodian rap artist Tiny Toones to write and perform for one of the numbers.

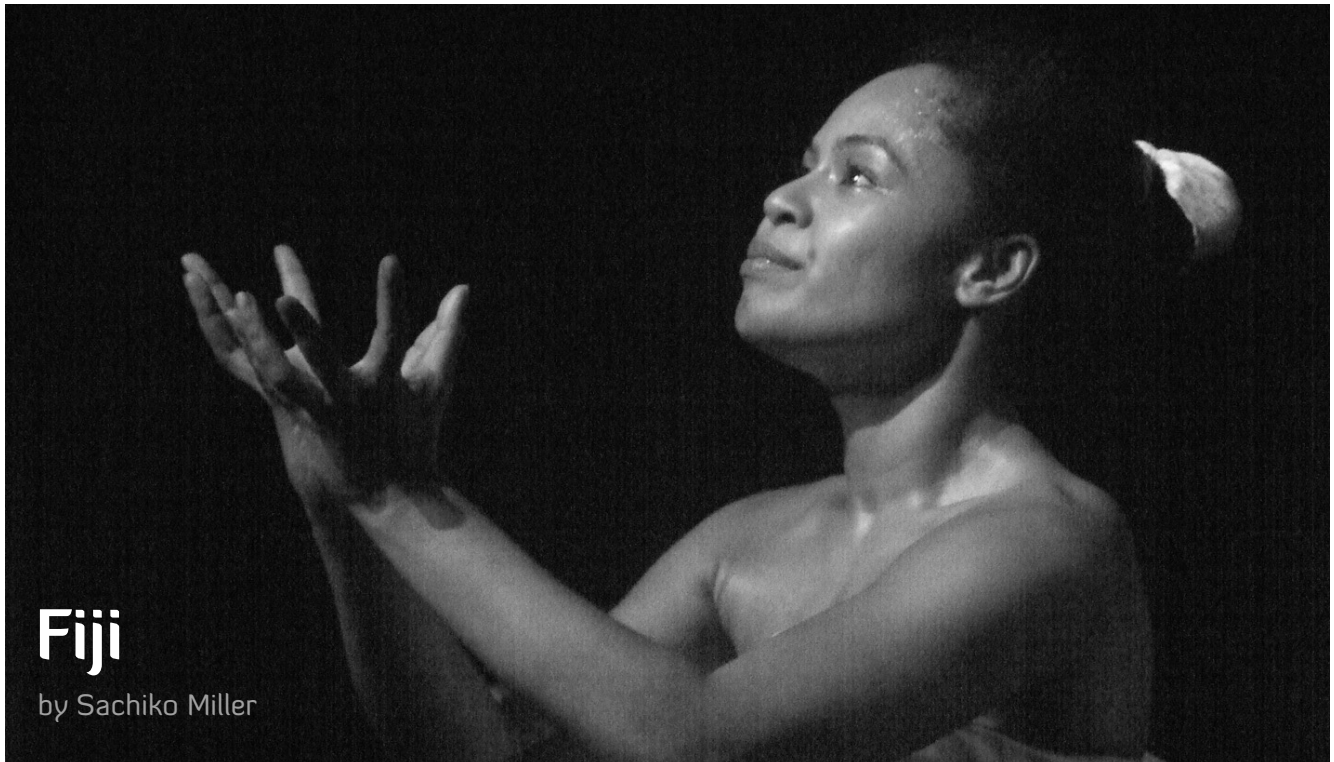
We are in the final stages of producing our publication *Beyond the Apsara – Celebrating Dance in Cambodia* in collaboration with Stephanie Burridge. The book is slated to be launched at the next WDA–AP conference in New Delhi.

News from Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, Artistic Director of Khmer Arts

In November 2008, The Khmer Arts Ensemble presented the world premieres of two dances by Sophiline Cheam Shapiro. *Spiral XII*, a commission from the Los Angeles Master Chorale, was set on eight dancers to Chinary Ung's score for 60 vocalists and 11 musicians at Disney Concert Hall. *Shir Ha-Shirim*, a commission from Works & Process, was set on four dancers and performed at New York's Guggenheim Museum to John Zorn's score for five female vocalists and two narrators. In February 2009, The Ensemble presented a work-in-progress presentation of *Rice*, a new work created in collaboration with Japanese ichigenkin master Issui Minegishi.

Khmer Arts' recently initiated Research & Archiving Program established partnerships with Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center in Phnom Penh and the Jerome Robbins Dance Collection of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, which will make portions of the archive available to the public.

The USA's National Endowment for the Arts has awarded Sophiline Cheam Shapiro a National Heritage Fellowship, the highest honor in the States for a folk or traditional artist. She'll receive her award at the Library of Congress in Washington DC and present a selection from her dance *Seasons of Migration* at the Music Center at Strathmore in Maryland in September 2009.



Tinaqu, 4 May 2009. Choreographer and performer: Sinu Naulumatua. Photographer: Ann Tarte

With the doom and gloom of the global recession hitting the world-wide artistic community hard, Fiji is no exception. Although there is less funding available for projects, Fijian dancers are still getting on with it and doing what we are all passionate about...dance! When we are faced with trying circumstances, this is when our emotions roar and some of our most creative works are realised.

With the opening of the new Fiji Arts Council headquarters, the Polynesian dance group Rako is flourishing. The group, founded by Letila Mitchell, strives to represent the Polynesian community in Fiji. The choreography is a reflection of Rako's mainly Rotuman members and other Polynesian friends from around the Pacific (of which there is a large population in Fiji) such as Samoans, Tongans and Cook Islanders. Rako is currently collaborating with a Tongan contemporary dance company On the Spot, and the culmination of this exchange will be a performance in Australia at the Dreaming Festival, which showcases Indigenous arts from across the world.

The month of May saw the début of the full-length production '*Tinaqu*' (my mother), by choreographer Sinu Naulumatua. The show, sponsored by Fiji Women's Rights society and UNAids, confronted the brutality and prevalence of violence against women in our society. The cast ranged from children to *maramas* (older ladies) accompanied by live music from the band Sneak Preview. The choreography was confrontingly severe, powerful and intense, and the spoken word in the production was beautifully and profoundly written and articulated. Naulumatua is a representation of what it is to be a powerful Pacific Island woman of Mana.

Next month Fiji will host a troupe of New Caledonian dancers led by Daniel Taboga and Soufiane Karim. They will lead an intensive

two-week workshop with contemporary and hip hop dancers in Suva. The end result of the workshop will be performed at the annual World Music Festival, which is held in June. The exchange will then continue with some of the dancers from the workshop selected to travel to New Caledonia in November to continue the work.

Fiji will host the Pacific Youth Festival from the 13–19 July, involving over 2000 participants from around the 12 Pacific countries. The main theme of this Pacific Youth Festival is *Our Culture, Your Heritage – Youth Leadership*, with sub themes: promoting healthy living, Pacific identities, climate change, and governance. The representatives from each of the Pacific nations will be performing both cultural and contemporary music and dances, and will also engage in various cultural exchanges, symposiums and workshops.

Closely following the conclusion of the Pacific Youth Festival is the opening of the much anticipated *Domoni Carmen* production. It is a Pacific remake of Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen*. It will be conducted and directed by Igelese Ete, recipient of the Senior Pacific Artist Award at the Creative New Zealand's Arts Pacific Awards and conductor of the choir for the Lord of the Rings movies. Local choreographer extraordinaire, Ateca Ravuvu, will create the choreography for *Domoni Carmen*. It is a huge undertaking involving dancers and singers from around the Pacific.

Hong Kong

by Anna CY Chan

Nurturing Young Choreographers

One of the main aspects to the work of the Hong Kong Dance Alliance (as listed in our three-year plan) is to cultivate new and emerging choreographers by identifying independent dance artists and providing resources and opportunities for them to present their work. Last November, the Alliance continued the *Dance Platform* project in which six choreographers at entry level were selected and provided with basic support to present their new works at the Fringe Theatre. The emerging choreographers were Iris Lau, Mei-wah Tam, Malvina, Ying Cai, Tsz-yan Leung, Cherry, Victor Fung, and May May Leong. Each choreographed a ten-minute new work under the supervision and artistic advice of local choreographer Pewan Chow.

Dance Critics Project

In February 2009, the Alliance initiated its first dance criticism project, *Dance Enhance: A Dance Appreciation and Criticism Writing Project*, to promote the discussion of dance. Jointly presented with the International Association of Theatre Critics (Hong Kong), this 4-month pilot project provides a platform for participants to share, to exchange views and open up discussions, and to review dance critically. Some of the reviews have been published in various media. This project incorporated different aspects of dance performances from the three flagship dance companies in Hong Kong and Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. A series of workshops and talks was given by experienced dance critics, choreographers and dancers, who shared their perspectives, from the basic ABCs of dance to practical demonstration and its aesthetic context. The insightful sharing and the writing of critical reviews helped the 30 participants to understand more about dance and express their points of view. The Alliance and the co-presenter were enthused by the interest in dance criticism evidenced by the project's over-subscription, and look forward to its continued growth.

Dance Awards 2009

The Hong Kong Dance Awards Presentation and Gala Performance, sponsored by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, was a spectacular celebration of Hong Kong dance excellence. The event was the 11th annual presentation of the prestigious awards and this year's guest of honour, Chairman of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, Mr Ma Fung Kwok, JP, presented the Distinguished Achievement Award to Ms Chu Kit for her 55-year contribution as dancer, choreographer and teacher, and her dedication to promoting traditional and modern Chinese dance in Hong Kong. A protégé of the renowned Chinese choreographer Wu Xiaobang and an outstanding solo dancer and choreographer of the Tien Ma Dance Troupe, Chu is a founding member, former Executive Committee member, and Vice Chairman of the Hong Kong Dance Alliance.

The other recipients of the Hong Kong Dance Awards are

- City Contemporary Dance Company for the production of *No End*
- The Hong Kong Ballet for the production of *Tricolor*
- Unlock Dancing Plaza for the production of *Phoenix II – Read the World with your Heart*
- Mui Cheuk-yin for her choreography of *Desperately Seeking Miss Blossom*
- Chen Lei and Xie Yin for their choreography of *Feng Shui Xing*
- Daniel Yeung for his creation and performance of *Medi-C*
- Su Shu for her performance in *Mulan, Snow Fox and Qingming Riverside*
- Luo Fan for his performance in *Out of the Box* and *No End*
- The Hong Kong Ballet for the educational production of *Evolution of Ballet*
- HKAPA EXCEL for providing high quality life-long learning arts education programs.

New Artistic Directors

Hong Kong Dance Company has appointed Leung Kwok-shing as Artistic Director. He has a long affiliation with the company and was one of the founding artists in 1981. During his past 26 years of services, Leung has assumed different roles in the company, such as rehearsal master, choreographer, director, and Assistant Artistic Director. In recognition of Leung's outstanding contribution in promoting the art of dance in Hong Kong in recent years, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council also awarded him the Hong Kong Arts Development Award 2008.

In May, The Hong Kong Ballet also appointed Ms Madeleine Onne as Artistic Director of the company. Formerly Artistic Director of the Royal Swedish Ballet from 2002 to 2008, Onne was a former principal dancer with the Royal Swedish Ballet and founder and manager of Stockholm's 59 Degrees North.

The appointment of these artistic directors will mark an important milestone for the two flagship companies in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong Dance Festival 2010

After the success of the Hong Kong Dance Festival 2006, presented by the Hong Kong Dance Alliance in partnership with the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Hong Kong Arts Development Council will commission Hong Kong Dance Festival 2010. Hong Kong Dance Alliance has been invited to organise a dance conference in conjunction with the Dance Festival 2010. The conference will consist of paper presentations, workshops and panel discussions. Details about the open call for proposals and program events will be announced in due course. To receive detailed information about the festival when it is published, please send your name and contact details to hkdalli@netvigator.com.

Dancer Bo Bo Lai performing in choreographer Cherry Leung's *Witnessing Changes* at the Dance Platform 2008 project .Photographer: Steven Lawrence.



India

by Dr Sunil Kothari

This year we have been busy preparing for the WDA–AP Annual General Meeting and Conference to be held from 28 November to 1 December 2009 in New Delhi, India. Conference details can be found on page 30 in the report by Dr Urmimala Sarkar.

In December 2008, I attended the Natya Kala Conference, an international conference in Chennai, South India. The conference theme was Ramayana in Performing Arts. Scholarly papers were submitted and a number of dancers presented their own interpretations of the main characters of Ramayana in different dance forms, including all the eight major classical dance forms of India: Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Manipuri, Kathakali, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Mohini Attam and Sattriya dances. I presented a paper about the Kechak dance of Bali and Indian classical Bharatanatyam dance, performed by Indian Diaspora dancers from Minnesota during their tour in Bali two years ago. It was an international cross-cultural collaboration. Paula Robson spoke about Ramayana in folk traditions and dancers from Cambodia demonstrated (see picture below) a Cambodian version.

International Dance Day was celebrated by WDA–AP Karnataka chapter with 60 dance troupes from all over Karnataka, South India. Performances took place from 8 am till 8 pm. Ramli Ibrahim from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, presented *Rasa Unmasked*, his latest cross-cultural work with Sydney-based Indian dance company Lingalayam. (See Elephant House Project report, p.13)

WDA – West Bengal, Rabindra Bharati University's Centre for Studies and Research on Modern Dance, and Kolkata Sarved in collaboration with the Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre presented *Dancing Life*, an all day program to commemorate International Dance Day on 29 April 2009. The day started with a roundtable conference titled *Dance, Community and Livelihood*. The afternoon program included the screening and discussion of two films about the lives of dancers. The day concluded with a gala evening performance by eminent dancers in Kolkata.



Sophiline Cheam Shapiro demonstrating at the Natya Kala Conference.
Photographer: Lalitha Venkat

Karnataka Chapter

by Sai Venkatesh

WDA–AP Karnataka chapter was inaugurated by Dr Sunil Kothari, Vice President WDA–AP India on 29 April 2008 (International Dance Day) at Seva Sadan Auditorium, Malleswaram, Bangalore.

Many activities were undertaken over the course of the year. Among the workshops presented, Pandit Gopal Prasad Dubey's workshop on *Chhau dances: masked dances of Bihar*, received a very good response. A talk on the Kathak dance form by Mysore B Nagaraj Rao was delivered at Koshy's, and there was a workshop by V.A.K Rangarao about Padams and Javalis songs used in Bharatanatyam. Dr Kannan Pugazhendi, a sports medicine consultant in Chennai, presented a useful workshop on dance injuries.

A major event for the Chapter was *Mahashakti* – a dance-drama organised in collaboration with Sai Arts International. This was followed by a solo dance series in Yakshagana form.



Group dance in Bharatanatyam by local Bangalore dancers, International Dance Day celebrations in Bangalore, 29 April 2009 under the aegis of WDA–AP Karnataka chapter. Photographer: Sai Venkatesh

Japan

by Yukihiro Yoshida and Mika Ikeda

From Japanese ballet to the dance creation of Mika Ikeda – flexible, collaborative dance creation

Contemporary dance using ballet techniques has been popular with Japanese choreographers since the '90s. This stylistic approach has become a stereotype of the Japanese interpretation of Western dance. However, new dance forms are being developed; a new breed of young Japanese dancers and choreographers is leading its generation into the next decade. Mika Ikeda is one of these important artists who presents her dance to the world through digital networks.

As a dance critic, I share the feelings, attitudes and concepts of collaboration with Ikeda. I work with research nodes, texts and links in worldwide hypertext; in this way I coexist in different cultures and ideologies through virtual environments. I have been a member of the International Advisory Committee in Digital Communities Division, Prix Ars Electronica and am currently working with Prof. Johannes Birringer: www.dance-tech.net/group/eukiyo%20. In this project, I'm working for 'media performance', 'archives', and 'digital communities'. These terminologies are the foundation of the next generation.

Japanese critics' role in representing dance in Japan

Eiryō Ashihara and Natsuya Mitsuyoshi were two important modern dance critics in the 1930s. Ashihara praised only ballet and his approach was influenced by French dance history. Mitsuyoshi analysed both ballet and modern dance and his approach was influenced by American dance history. Ashihara even criticised performances by Harold Kreutzberg and Sacharoff in the 1930s in Tokyo, at the same time Mitsuyoshi commended their performances.

At this time, Nihon Buyo and Japanese modern dance, such as Baku Ishii and Michio Ito, were popular and Japanese ballet was only beginning. In Taiwan, before World War II, people were exposed to ballet through Ashihara's work. Mitsuyoshi was familiar with Yeichi Nimura, who taught dance at Studio 61 in Carnegie Hall in NYC and is known as an early American modern dance pioneer.

Dance criticism after the 1950s was influenced by their two different styles. Post-war dance critics such as Miyabi Ichikawa, Ken'ji Usui and Hakudai Yamano followed their styles. Usui was known for his achievement in the field of ballet, and Ichikawa in the tradition of Ashihara. Ichikawa discussed ballet and the new dance movement of Japanese Butoh. Ballet became popular in Japanese society with the arrival of *Swan Lake* in 1946. Recently dance critics and editors reflect a style close to Ashihara. Yamano and Yoshida follow Mitsuyoshi.

Japanese avant-garde dance from the '60s used mass media and insisted on strong individualism and originality. Artists in the '90s were similar. They worked in a high consumption society. Artists like Motoko Hirayama, Kenshi Nomi and Ryohei Kondo from the field of modern dance developed their own style of Japanese contemporary dance. They focused on ballet-based techniques, and ballet fans and writers from the '90s preferred their works.

Ikeda follows them but her work has a different feeling; she approaches dance creation with more flexibility.

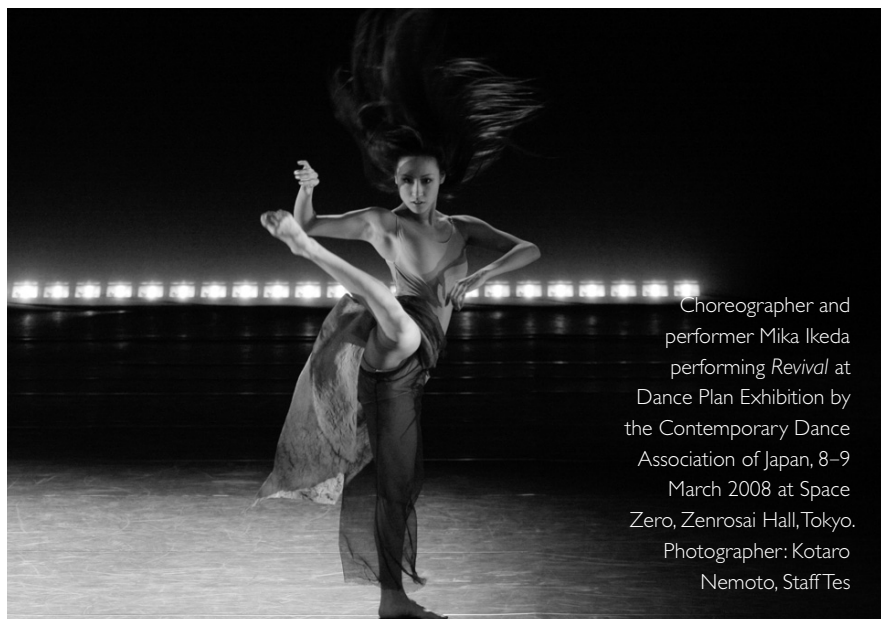
Ikeda comes from the Akita prefecture, which is the birth place of Baku Ishii, and Ikeda can dance Ishii-style very well. She started dancing as a child, first learning

modern dance. She studies modern dance, ballet, Japanese traditional dance and contemporary dance but her work *Revival* was created using contemporary dance techniques.

She works in Tokyo and presents her work to the world through digital networks. She worries that the world is becoming more mechanised, so she makes a point of using emotion in her work. Her latest work *Snow Wall* reminds the audience of this concept. Emotion is an important tradition in Japanese dance, from Nihon Buyo to modern dance. She applies that to contemporary dance.

Another pioneer, Yoshie Kaku, also known as the Children's Dancer, has quite a similar view to Ikeda. Even in the age of digital media, she works in the field of live arts, and believes in and studies its possibilities. Her dance practice represents another approach to dance creation in the emerging generation. Ikeda's activities represent this new generation's perspective in the age of globalisation.

These new concepts and styles enable this generation of young Japanese dance artists to present new forms to the dance world.



Choreographer and performer Mika Ikeda performing *Revival* at Dance Plan Exhibition by the Contemporary Dance Association of Japan, 8–9 March 2008 at Space Zero, Zenrosai Hall, Tokyo. Photographer: Kotaro Nemoto, Staff Tes

Korea

by Eun Jung Choi



Viengsay Valdes and Elier Bourzac from the Cuba National Ballet performing *Don Quixote*.

The WDA–AP Korea chapter started 2009 with Pillar Moving Company (directed by Yang Sook Cho, WDA Korea Secretary General) being invited to perform at the International Dance Festival in Bangkok. This festival is organised by the friends-of-the-Arts foundation (Director Vararom Pachimasawat) in partnership with Thailand's Ministry of Culture and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. This year, the festival started on 14 March and continued for two weeks. Pillar Moving Company successfully finished its performance at Centerpoint Playhouse in Bangkok. As the Thai public has not had much exposure to modern dance, it was a valuable opportunity to introduce Korean modern dance and choreographers. Artistic Director Yang Sook Cho expressed her gratitude for the warm, welcoming and positive assistance provided by the festival.

Due to the global economic crisis, the market size of the performing arts in Korea has shrunk. Consequently, WDA–AP Korea has been faced with the difficulties of finding sponsors and funds. Nevertheless, from the 4–5 June 2009, WDA–AP Korea will host the 6th World Ballet Star Festival at the Opera House, Seoul Arts Center in order to give dance fans in Korea a rare opportunity to see the world's finest ballet dancers. This year's invited world famous couples are: Polina Semionova and Dmytryi Semionov from the Berlin Staatsoper Ballet, Ekaterina Osmolkina and Mikhail Lobukhin from the Kirov Ballet, Viengsay Valdes and Elier Bourzac from Ballet Nacional de Cuba .

WDA–AP Korea's own annual performance series, the *Color of Dance*, has been selected as one of the national teams at The 3rd World Festival of National Theaters. This year's concept colour is Gold. Three choreographers will show their own interpretation of the colour on stage. This festival takes place in the National Theater of Korea from 25 August to 4 November 2009. The *Color of Dance* will be performed at the Small Hall 'Dal' from the 15–16 September 2009.

Philippines

by Basilio Esteban S. Villaruz

February is 'the' month for Philippine cultural events. The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) appropriates it as National Arts Month, while the Cultural Centre of the Philippines (CCP) marks the first of the month as *Pasinaya* (inauguration of an event). For the stage, the Commission presents music, dance and the other arts nationwide, while the Centre fills all its venues with music, theatre and dance. February is the best time to see a large variety of Filipino arts.

The anticipated Ballet Philippines annual Neo-Filipino program was also presented in February. This year it revived Alice Reyes' modern dance classic *Amada*. Works from two national artists were included, composer Lucrecia Kasilag and fictionist Nick Joaquin. Also included were premieres from Alden Lugnasin and Max Luna, now artistic director with Alan Hiline.

Again in February, the Centre launched its 40th anniversary with *Rubies: Gems in Philippine Performing Arts*. Dance groups performing included Ballet Philippines, Philippine Ballet Theatre, Ballet Manila and Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group. The centre was built in 1969 by Pres. Ferdinand Marcos and wife Imelda Romualdez and is one of the earliest modern theatres in South East Asia.

Congratulations to Filipino choreographer Rhosam Prudenciado who was awarded the Grand Prize at the Yokohama Solo x Duo Choreography Competition in Japan. Earlier this year his piece *Which Way* won at the 2008 Wi-Fi Body festival, presented by the WDA Philippines chapter.

The NCCA cited Quezon City Ballet/ Shirley Halili Cruz School of Dance for winning places in ballet competitions in Asia and the USA. Similarly, the Bayanihan National Philippine Folk Dance Company was cited for honours abroad.

At the month's end, Gawad Buhay! The PHILSTAGE Awards for the Performing Arts, honoured jury-chosen artists and productions. Those receiving awards for dance were Lisa Macuja Elizalde, Camille Ordinario Josen and Biag Gaongen, choreographer Agnes Locsin and her



Moriones Festival in Marinduque, Philippines. Photographer:?

ballet *La Revolucion Filipina* (The Philippine Revolution).

March featured two contemporary dance events. The first, *mc2* from Paul Morales' Airdance, Myra Beltran's Dance Forum and University of the Philippines Dance Company, was directed by Herbert Alvarez and Angel Lawenko Baguiat. This event was a unique collaboration between the choreographers and composers of the Asian Composers League.

The second event was E-dance Theatre Performing Arts Lab Inc.'s *Projekt: Venus v.2*, a consolidated work by Gerald Mercado.

During National Dance Week/ International Dance Day, most of these dance leaders also presented as part of *Contemporary Dance Map* (an initiative of World Dance Alliance Philippines Choreographers' Network) with their groups in studios, schools and centres in Metro-Manila. A program was also held at Instituto Cervantes' own centre. They now look forward to the Wi-Fi Body Festival in July at CCP, in association with the centre, NCCA, Japan Foundation, WDA-Philippines and University of the Philippines Dance Company.

At the same time, the NCCA National Dance Committee held an international dance festival in Dumaguete City. Keynote guest was Dr Mohd Anis Md Nor, president

of World Dance Alliance-Asia Pacific (see report for South East Asia).

Again in April in Bacolod City, the Negros Festival matched choreographic feats from fiestas of different municipalities. It made a dynamic and colorful regional kaleidoscope.

The movable feast of the Holy Week was also in April. Fervently observed in Marinduque island as *Moriones* festival, it is always an experience. The people celebrate *Longinus*, a *morion* (guard) who pierced Christ's side. Half-blind, he regained his sight from a spurt of Jesus' blood, leading to his conversion. In turn, he was pursued by fellow guards (*moriones*), portrayed as Romans with wooden masks, breastplates, capes, swords and shields. As ordered by Pilate, Longinus was beheaded. (Pilate's wife Claudia also converted to Christianity.) The hunt is annually played out in the streets and through a Cenacle play.

An innovation today is Easter's street dancing from several quarters, at the end adjudicated. Young dancers dress up as *moriones*, competing as masked guards of the biblical times but localised in the traditions of *Marinduque*.

In April, municipalities nationwide flocked to Manila for the *Aliwan* street dance competition. The prize is most prestigious. The winner was *Buyogan Festival* from the town of Abuyog in Leyte province, who earlier won in two capitals in the Visayas area.

Malaysia

by Bilqis Hijjas



Over the last six months, MyDance Alliance has been busy building networks and laying the groundwork for future projects. We recently had some changes to our committee membership. Treasurer Penny Oh decided to continue her dance education overseas, and MyDance Alliance assisted her with a small travel grant to Australia. Penny has been replaced by Sim Jui Ching, a dance studio owner from the town of Klang. The head of our Management & Promotion Network, Teoh Ming Jin, has stepped down in favour of Choy Su-Ling. Su-Ling is well known in Malaysia as a dance reviewer for popular English newspaper *The Star*, as well as a blogger on the performing arts

at <http://break-a-leg.blogspot.com>. Su-Ling has recently launched *AsiaDanceChannel.com*, an effort to help link business interests to the dance world, and is also in partnership with MyDance Alliance to offer pro bono public relations assistance to local dance artists through her PR company *Pixarus Communications Sdn. Bhd.* We look forward to having Su-Ling's help in promoting our projects and opportunities, and building our relationships with local media.

In other committee changes, we also welcomed Suhaili Micheline Ahmad Kamil to the fold. Last year we provided Suhaili with a small grant to travel to Australia to perform. This year she does us proud by winning the Most Promising Artist Award at the 7th BOH Cameronian Arts Awards, Malaysia's most prestigious awards for the performing arts (see www.kakiseni.com/). At the same awards, Lee Lee Lan, former Vice-President of WDA-Asia Pacific and a driving force behind the formation of MyDance Alliance in 1994, was awarded the BOH Cameronian Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of her continuing contribution to the development of dance in Malaysia.

MyDance Alliance celebrated International Dance Day this year by supporting a day of dance workshops at private arts centre Rimbun Dahan (www.rimbundahan.org), produced by Secretary Bilqis Hijjas. Local choreographers, including Suhaili Micheline, were invited to teach excerpts of their choreography so that the crowd of intermediate and advanced dance students could have a taste of the works, just as they had seen them performed on stage! Now in its third year, this day of dance workshops is an important event for dancers and choreographers from different genres and communities to meet each other and develop future collaborations. This year we also used it as a membership drive for MyDance Alliance to recruit younger dancers.

MyDance Alliance has also been building its connections with a broader segment of the local dance community. Our fortnightly



Choreographer Azwa leading an open workshop for intermediate/advanced dancers at Dance Day at Rimbun Dahan, 1 May 2009
 Photographer: p. 22 and top right p. 23 by Amir Hon. All other photos by Jenna Teh.

electronic newsletter is available free to anyone with an email account, and in the past few months it has been chock full of announcements of community news, upcoming performances, training and workshops, and opportunities for dancers overseas. We have also decided to include a summary of recent dance reviews from public newspapers and private blogs, to encourage more local dance writing and critical discourse. To subscribe to our e-newsletter go to www.mydancealliance.org/ and enter your name and email address in the form on the front page.

To lessen the burden of producing dance shows locally, MyDance Alliance has voted to decrease the hourly rental rates of its Community Studio in Petaling Jaya, making it, as far as we know, the cheapest studio in town! While we strongly encourage dance productions looking for rehearsal space to take up the offer, we also hope that individuals and community organisations will use it as a venue to run their activities, thus extending familiarity with local dance events beyond the usual community of dancers and dance fans.

In the next six months, MyDance Alliance is looking forward to launching a Small Grants Fund, in order to standardise

the application and approval process for small travel and activity grants given to members. Despite shifts in the status of the local Ministry of the Arts, due to political changes, we hope to receive support from the Ministry for our small grants fund, as well as for a weekend of site-specific dance works and a mentorship project linking our members with youth dance groups in preparation for a final performance. We are buzzing with ideas, and we hope that our new line up of committee members will be able to make our dreams become reality.

Singapore

by Dr Caren Carino

Recent developments in the Singapore dance scene signalled a critical review of WDA Singapore's current initiatives: *International Dance Day* (in Singapore), a dance community project; *Made in Singapore*, a platform featuring emerging talent from a range of dance genres in Singapore; *Singapore's Dance Legacy – The Unsung Heroes*, a commemorative occasion honouring behind-the-scenes individuals who have contributed significantly to Singapore's dance scene but have not been recognised in any national awards platforms; and a dance forum to encourage discourse on various dance topics. However, since the beginning of January 2009 all but one of the original initiatives were taken on by private or government organisations. This is positive for the development of dance in Singapore but it meant that WDA Singapore needed to re-think its anchor projects. After serious deliberation, the executive officers identified two main events centred on connectivity: *International Dance Day* – connecting Singapore's dance community and *Asia-Pacific Dance Bridge* – connecting Singapore to the region and beyond.

Hence, *International Dance Week*, 18–25 April 2009 was organised and sponsored by Singapore's National Arts Council and National Library Board. The launch was held at the Plaza, National Library, and featured 22 performances. Singapore's schools and community organisations presented many genres including ballet, contemporary dance, cultural dance forms (Malay, Indian, Spanish dance) as well as hip-hop. Three satellite events were hosted later in the week, including *Arts at Chong Pang* by Chong Pang Community Centre, *Classical Indian Dance* by Bhaskar's Arts Academy and *Step Up!* by Maya Dance Theatre.

Earlier in April, the *Singapore Youth Festival 2009* (Central Judging of Dances for secondary schools, junior colleges, centralised institute and IP schools) was organised by the Ministry of Education, Co-Curricular Activities Branch (CCAB). The event saw World Dance Alliance Asia-Pacific Vice President Yunyu Wang and other WDA members participate as adjudicators, including Urmimala Sarkar (India); Carol Walker (Taiwan); Siri Rama (Singapore); Stephanie Burrridge (Singapore); Goh Lai-Keun (Singapore); Caren Carino (Singapore) and Yam Boon Fong (Singapore), who was one of the CCAB Dance officers in charge of the dance festival judging.

WDA Singapore looks to moving forward with its plans to facilitate connectivity within the Singapore dance community and beyond. The Annual General Meeting, to be held in July, will hopefully see new blood in the organisation to steer it in this direction.



The Fuhua Ballet Gems performing *Mystical Water* at the International Dance Week Kickoff Event, 18 April 2009. Photographer: James Tan

Taiwan

by Su-ling Chou

Since its establishment, WDA–AP Taiwan has grown and stabilised. Annual events have been flourishing, including those by professional dance groups, educational institutions and members. To reach its members, WDA Taiwan created the International Young Choreographer Project (previously known as the Asia Young Choreographer Project), which invites one choreographer from WDA Americas; four from WDA–AP and three from Taiwan. Each year, the event brings together eight artists to create a final performance at the end of a three-week residency.

Although the state of the economy has depressed many of us, WDA–AP Taiwan remains the same. Both research and performance are active.

Reflect (see picture opposite page), a production by Tso's Dance Association, a member of WDA–AP Taiwan, received a nomination in The 7th Taishin Arts Awards. The Dance College of TNUA is directing the opening ceremony of 2009 World Games, which is hosted by Kaohsiung City Government, Taiwan. The international athletic games will open on 16 July. Under the direction of the working team from TNUA, all the dance groups, organisations and schools gather together to present the beauty, power and energy of Kaohsiung City. WDA–AP member Yunyu Wang is the Artistic Director for dance and Suling Chou is the dance administrator.

The membership of WDA–AP Taiwan is looking forward to contributing more to promote and develop dance in Taiwan and Asia.



Double C Dance Company performing choreographer Chun-shien Wu's *Reflex* (May 23–24 2008). Photographer: Zen-hau

WDA–AP Taiwan members activities, July to December 2008

Performance

- **Scarecrow Contemporary Dance Company** *Wanderer of the Time*, 28–29 May at Tainan County Southern Community Service Center Performance Hall
- **Sun-Shier Dance Theatre** *Reflection*, 15 May at Tsoying Dance Theatre, 16 May at Chiayi Performing Art Centre, 24 May at Cultural Affairs Bureau of Taoyuan County Government Performance Hall, 5–7 June at NTCH Experimental Theatre
- **Yi-Tzy Folk Dance Theatre** *2009 Yi Tzy Folk Dance Theatre—Love Taiwan*, 16 May at Tainan County Culture Center; 27 June at Tainan County Southern Community Service Center Performance Hall, 15 July at Cultural Affairs Bureau of Chiayi City Government Music Hall, 24 July at Department of Culture and Tourism of Taitung County Government Art and Cultural Center
- **Assembly Dance Company** *Twinkling Jade*, 10 Jan. at Hsin-Chuang City Culture Center of Arts
- **Taipei Folk Dance Theatre** *Let's go to see the opera*, 13 June at Taipei Cultural Center - Wen-Shan Branch Center
Phoenix Chinese Taipei 2009, 5–7 February, Phoenix Arizona United States
Traditional Opera Festival In 435, 10 April at Banciao 435-Art-District
Bravo! Taiwan Culture, 11 April at Whashang-Art-District
- **Taipei Physical Education College** *10th Anniversary Dance Concert Dept. of Dance Taipei Physical College – Dance Spirit Revitalization*, 14 April at Kaohsiung Municipal Cultural Center; 22 April at Taichung Chung Shan Hall, 25 April at The Metropolitan Hall
- **Chung-Hwa School of Arts** *2009 Under 18 Youth Art Series Event Annual dance of Dance Division*, 16 April at Kaohsiung Municipal Cultural Center; 23 April at Cultural Affairs Bureau of Pingtung County Jhonjheng Art Center; 28 April at Tainan Municipal Cultural Center
- **Tsoying Dance Group, Tsoying High School** *2009 Tsoying Dance Troupe Performance*, Jan. 7 at Tainan Municipal Cultural Center; Jan. 10 at Liudui Hakka Cultural Park, 27 March at Kaohsiung Municipal Cultural Center;
- **Tso's Dance Association** *I-Fan 45 Solo*, 22–23 May at Tsoying Dance Theatre
2009 International Young Choreographers Project Showings, July 25 and 26, at Tsoying Dance Theatre
- **Kaohsiung City Ballet** *2008 Dance Shoe 6*, 14–15 February at NTCH Experimental Theatre, 21 February at The Eslite Theater in Tainan City, 7 March at Wei Wu Ying Center for the Art
The Peony Pavilion, 23–24 May at The Metropolitan Hall, 6 June at Taichung County Seaport Art Center, 13 June at Hsinchu Municipal Performance Hall, 4 July at Kaohsiung Municipal Cultural Center

Scholarships

- **Chin Lin American Dance Festival Scholarship**, sponsored by Chin Lin Foundation for Culture and Arts (CLFCA).
- **The Award for the New Generation Choreographers in Taiwan**, by CLFCA.
- **The Award for Graduates' Paper Presentation**, by CLFCA.
- **The European Vagrant Project**, by CLFCA.
- **TNUA-Vanessa Scholarship**, by CLFCA.

Conferences

- 'The 2009 Cross-Strait Seminar', 15–16 May by National Taiwan University Of The Arts.

Sponsorships

- 2009 Annual Plan of Taiwan Dance Research Association by CLFCA and Ministry of Education, Taiwan.
- 2009 Annual Plan of Tso's Dance Association by CLFCA and its memberships.
- 2009 WDAAP – Taiwan Annual Planning by CLFCA.
- The Development of Young Artists Grant by CLFCA.

Workshops

- Martial Arts Training, 9 March to 21 May, Guling Street Avant-garde Theatre by 8213 Physical Dance Theatre

Thailand

by Wanasak Padungsestakit (edited by Pornrat Damrhung)



Wanasak Padungsestakit is a young dancer who has recently graduated and will receive his MA in Drama from the Graduate School Chulalongkorn University. His final project *Jai jao Lor*, was an experimental dance-theatre work based on an old Northern folk story.

A small upswing of dance in Thailand

What is the situation of contemporary dance in Thailand? Most young dancers in Thailand come from one of the many performing arts colleges, schools or institutes across the country. After graduating, they either stop being a dancer or continue working in the field of dance. Because opportunities to dance while making a living are few and difficult, more choose the former rather than the latter path.

As someone who graduated in dance, I still work as a performing artist. To survive, I, like other young Thai dancers, have to work in commercial dance or dance education, often moving back and forth between them. Small contemporary dance troupes in Thailand that weave across the commercial and educational divide include Komonlagoon, Sun-theatre, and Associate Dance troupe. By combining various styles, these troupes permit dancers to earn their living and to create their own style as they work together toward unknown and uncertain ends.

These small troupes of young dancers perform non-profit artistic work at least once a year so that they can join the Bangkok Theatre Festival (held each November in Bangkok), and other festivals at their own institutions or, more rarely, abroad. They also work at

commercial events, on TV shows and even dance in entertainment complexes, as well as teaching dance and other subjects at various institutes.

The grouping of dancers is very complex and interesting as it reflects multilayered connections and approaches to training as well as ties to various teachers. The old system of the troupe-leader who guides troupe members still often follows the old-fashioned Thai style of a producer-director who is the dance master, but even they have begun adopting new contemporary modes of dance and organisation.

Students today train in many styles and try to do more experimental work to find what works well for them and with their audiences, as they create their individual styles. Many dancers have been trained primarily in classical Thai dance but to continue working in dance, they need to learn other forms and styles. One old contemporary Thai dance troupe that consists mainly of dancers trained first in classical Thai dance, have just received an award at an international competition in Indonesia, and were recognised as the best contemporary production. This is another way to get recognition and to be promoted for the next paid performance.

The future for contemporary dance in Thailand looks challenging, since it is barely acknowledged by the government, the media, or by academics, and therefore gains little public or artistic recognition. To survive, the individual dancers and ad hoc dance troupes need to continue balancing earning a living with creating dance pieces that are as meaningful to their audiences as they are to themselves.



Choreographer: Wanasak Padungsestakit

Work: *Korn-Job Dramas*, performed at the Special Research Festival of Dramatic Arts, 21- 25 January 2009, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University

Dancers: Pitak Katkeaw, Aumpika Chumjai, Nattaporn Phetraung

Musicians: Pipat Shiengcharee, Supachoke Boonsrang

Poet and singer: Jampar Seanprom

Photographer: Wichaya Artamat



Ten Days on the Island Festival

Tasmania, 27 March to 5 April 2009

by Stephanie Burridge

Fleur Alder in Gail Mabo's *Kelp*. Photographer: Rob Burnett.

I was very excited to be going back to Tasmania to share some of my dance experiences at the 10 Days on the Island Festival symposium. Growing up on this pristine island of wilderness, white sands and historic towns and villages was often frustrating – the door to the rest of the world seemed far away. Like many of the dancers coming to perform at Australia's only 'island-based' festival, we knew what it was like to be resilient, seek opportunities beyond our shores, travel, explore and create. Perhaps it is significant that a large number of Australia's prominent artists come from Tasmania – including choreographer Graeme Murphy, composer Peter Sculthorpe and a host of writers, filmmakers, actors and arts practitioners.

The dancers who came together for this unique festival represented communities as far flung as Taiwan, Japan, Hawaii, Samoa, New Caledonia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Aotearoa New Zealand and the Torres Strait. It was convened by Annie Greig, the Artistic Director of Tasdance. Titled TAP Dance (Tasmania Asia Pacific) the Symposium and festival were presented by three Tasmanian organisations: Tasdance, Tasmania's contemporary dance company; Tasmania's bi-annual international arts festival Ten Days on the Island and The University of Tasmania's School of Visual and Performing Arts in Launceston. It was supported by the Asia Pacific Performing Arts Network (APPAN) and the World Dance Alliance Asia Pacific. The overall theme for the symposium was *Choreographing Within and Without Tradition*.

Shanta Serbjeet Singh, President of APPAN and I were invited as Keynote speakers and facilitators of a panel discussion with the artistic directors and choreographers of the dance companies. Shanta spoke about a project called *The UNESCO-Appan Post-Tsunami Stress Therapy and Rehabilitation Through the Arts Program*. She recounted 'how stress-battered victims of natural disaster felt empowered by experiencing and learning the use of music, dance, theatre, puppetry and other art forms'. This was an inspiring story that related to many of the themes underpinning the choreography that was performed at the festival such as loss – of loved ones, of culture, power and dignity. I spoke about some of the contradictions and dilemmas that occur for dancers working with tradition – issues such as pedagogy, cultural protocols, audience expectations, the purpose and intention of the performance.

A discussion with the artists followed – we were fortunate to have Gail Mabo (Torres Strait), Sthan Kabar-Louet (New Caledonia), Raka Maitra (Singapore), Daniel Yeung (Hong Kong), Efeso Fa'anana,

Leah Shelton and Lisa Fa'alafi (Samoa/Australia), Louise Potiki Bryant (Aotearoa New Zealand), Abel Coelho (Hawaii) and Wu Hsing-kuo (Taiwan) on the panel. They spoke about their training, family backgrounds, choreography and artistic journeys. These were all extremely diverse and provided an intriguing picture of developments in dance, particularly in the Pacific region. Unfortunately, with such a spectrum of vibrant, creative talent, we ran out of time and have suggested for future symposiums a follow-up discussion session so that some underlying themes may emerge.

Crowds certainly flocked to the performances over the weekend at the Earl Theatre in Launceston. We began with the witty, yet poignant piece, *Teuila Postcards* by Australian/Samoan group Polytoxic. Tasdance performed Torres Strait Island choreographer/visual artist Gail Mabo's *Kelp* in a double bill with New Caledonian Sthan Kabar-Louet's joyous *The Cradle of the Spirits*. Mabo's work featured a mix of contemporary and indigenous dance made more interesting by fantastic headpieces that had a life of their own. *Cradle* drew on some familiar territory – in this case yoga postures and vocabulary from the choreographer's experience with Maurice Bejart. However, a solo by Joel Corpuz was outstanding, the energy of the Tasdance dancers electric and the final cleansing image of water trickling down bodies sensual and iconic.

Raka Maitra danced her contemporary Indian solo work *Boundaries, Borders and Beyond*. The relentless, repetitive 'excavation' into the original Odissi form proved a little long for an audience more used to a faster pace. Daniel Yeung, who shared the evening, provided a visual and athletic contrast with his tight, slick, techno heavy performance of *Med.C*.

Wu Hsing-kuo's *Lear* from Taiwan was masterful in its realisation of the Shakespearean work that incorporated personal thematic shifts, Chinese Opera training, and movement vocabulary gleaned from his years of performing with Cloud Gate Dance Theatre. New Zealand's Maori Atamira Dance Collective's *Ngai Tahu 32*, created by Louise Potiki Bryant, was the most moving performance of the season. While the water lapped gently over bodies in a centrally placed canoe, the dancers sang and danced their overwhelming sense of loss, the displacement of their culture and their spiritual connection to their homeland.

It was an extremely enjoyable and insightful symposium and one that I would recommend more WDA members include on their calendars for 2011.

Dancing Between Diversity and Consistency: Articulation and Dynamic Judgment

by Dr Maggi Phillips

The project, *Dancing between Diversity and Consistency: Refining Assessment in Postgraduate Degrees in Dance*, came to life as a direct response to the dance discipline's relatively recent entry into postgraduate studies. To emphasise our legitimacy in academic contexts, dance researchers needed to participate in big picture research agendas and, in this case, become active contributors into enquiries into learning and teaching policy formation at a postgraduate level. The defining opportunity arose from the coincidence of Tertiary Dance Council discussions about the need to profile dance research and invitations to submit expressions of interest into grants offered by the new Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC). We offered an angle on higher degree examinations and were surprised and humbled to be winners of a Priority Projects Assessment grant. Significantly, our success appeared to be due to the organisational communications of dance, beginning with the interconnections of dance academics with the profession's representational body, Ausdance, and radiating outwards to WDA affiliations. With these interconnections, my colleagues, Associate Professors Cheryl Stock (QUT) and Kim Vincs (Deakin), and I could argue for wide spheres of consultation and dissemination, aspects aligning with ALTC's policy that became clear as we progressed through the investigation.

We started with many questions, the most crucial being how embodiment itself may be assessed in the context of Masters and Doctoral examinations. We

had to find out what was expected and demanded of this alternative knowledge, both from the point of view of the dance profession and of the university. Hence, a cross-over methodology emerged, soliciting perceptions from the two sectors. Extensive interviews were conducted with supervisors, examiners, research deans and candidates to determine expectations, experiences and existing protocols; community forums took place in association with Ausdance to gauge the prevailing views of the profession and university intersection; and assessment and creative arts literature was surveyed to gain national and international dimensions on the state of 'examination' at postgraduate levels. Access to World Dance Alliance participants at the Brisbane Global Summit in July 2008 gave the investigators an invaluable opportunity to evaluate interim findings by circulating a draft set of recommendations for comment. The subsequent responses formed the shape and dissemination processes of the findings.

The principal outcome of the project, guidelines for examination, is published in a booklet and website under the project's title (www.dancingbetweendiversity.com/) and includes fundamental definitions, guidelines for dance-specific variations to the Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies' publication on doctoral studies (August 2005); discursive papers on various issues encountered in the research; and an extensive bibliography for future research in the area. The website also includes a database of Australian dance theses which we hope to maintain on an on-going basis, to mark achievements and accumulated disciplinary research. Here we have to acknowledge the contributions of research assistants, Jonathan Mustard, Dr Maria Adriana Verdaasdonk, Dianne Reid and Dr Katrina Rank.

Recommendations cover a range of findings in terms of pragmatic situations, but the main thrust concerns a dynamism on the part of examiners who are, in turn, guided by candidates' clear articulation of research intentions, whether through practice outputs/performance, processes or by interdisciplinary explorations. That perspective places the weight of evaluation on a system which relies on candidates' initiative (and supervisory advice) as much as it does on the examiners' willingness to engage with new knowledge and alternative

approaches to conventions. There is no way of 'fixing' where an investigation may lead. It must be by the very notion of discovery, remain emergent.

In overview, our recommendations are guided by generous contributions of all participants in this research, by considered responses to issues that affect their lives, careers and studies and above all by the value that people placed in the partnership between research and dance. The culminating booklet and website moved into being through the multiplicities of shared knowledge and experiences. Our only regret is that, for now, mere printed documents cannot encapsulate the eloquence of movement with which perspectives were given; those unseen choreographies which lie in the gravity of dance research and, we hope, will be kinaesthetic actualities within its futures.

The trust ALTC personnel have placed in the dance discipline is also considerable. ALTC's workshops and forums enabled us to gain confidence in being part of the higher degree scene, a stage we dared enter only relatively recently, enabling us to see that dance is not alone in grappling with the 'academic' difficulties of practice.

Finally, we are conscious that outcomes are but another element in an ongoing process that involves examiner education and ongoing dialogues about processes for candidates, supervisors, examiners, research personnel and, most importantly, for the profession's health and vitality. It is a process which invariably engages with the complementarities of diversity and consistency, the difficult balance that we set out to achieve.

For access to *Dancing between Diversity and Consistency: Refining Assessment in Postgraduate Degrees in Dance: Guidelines for best practice in Australian Doctoral and Masters Examination*, encompassing the two primary modes of investigation, written and multi-modal theses, their distinctiveness and their potential interplay, please see www.dancingbetweendiversity.com/. If you would like to access a hard-copy version of the document, please contact maggi.phillips@ecu.edu.au.

WDA Asia Pacific Event

India, 28 November to 1 December 2009

WDA India welcomes you to the seminar 'Re-Searching Dance', and the Annual General Meeting of WDA-AP, to be held in New Delhi in November. This is the first World Dance Alliance event in India and we would like to extend a warm welcome to all members and other individuals who wish to participate.

Response to the announcement of the WDA India Event 2009 has been overwhelming. We have received excellent and encouraging support from government and non-government bodies in terms of funding and infrastructure, and we have also received excellent response from people interested in the seminars. The abstracts for proposed papers are already with the committee, and those whose papers have been accepted for presentation have now been notified.

In its previous conferences, the World Dance Alliance has placed immense importance and emphasis on equal and simultaneous discussion and debate on both the practice and the theory of dance. In keeping with past practice, the 2009 WDA event has been planned on the theme 'Re-Searching Dance'.

In opening the conference to all individuals who are concerned with important areas of dance practice and research in the context of society, politics, pedagogy, kinetics,

vocabulary, documentation, history and other topics of contemporary relevance, the principal areas of focus are:

- Movement, kinetics and society
- Presentation and representation
- Dance pedagogy of today

Choreolab

In addition to the conference and general WDA meetings, there will be a Choreolab (see Creation & Presentation Network report on p.7) and a limited number of master classes

Master classes

Master classes are now being finalised. It is expected that up to 20 young dancers will participate in these classes. Interested masters can write to us giving a two-page brief of what you wish to teach, and your biodata (see contact details below).

Evening performances

There will be two evenings of performances during the event. Groups from Cambodia (Amrita Performing Arts) and the Taiwan National University of the Arts (TNUA) will be performing, along with Indian dance companies.

Registration

The registration form, membership forms for Indian participants and a tentative schedule for the seminar and other events are available by emailing india.wda@gmail.com or visiting www.ausdance.org.au.

It would be most helpful if you could please return completed registration forms to us by 20 June 2009.

World Dance Alliance – Asia Pacific

Mission

To serve as a primary voice and support group for dance in the Asia-Pacific region

Objectives

- To promote the recognition, development and mutual understanding of all forms of dance.
- To facilitate communication and exchange among dance individuals, institutions and organisations interested in dance.
- To provide a forum for discussion of matters relating to dance.
- To encourage and support the research, education, criticism, creation and performance of dance.
- To liaise, co-ordinate and participate in activities with other dance organisations in the world.

Founder

Carl Wolz

Background

This independent, non-profit, non-political organisation began as the Asia-Pacific Dance Alliance in Hong Kong in 1988. In 1990, the global body, World Dance Alliance (WDA), was founded at the Hong Kong International Dance Conference. In 1993, the name of the Asia-Pacific Center was changed to WDA – Asia Pacific to reflect its relationship to the global body.

WDA – Asia Pacific is one of three regional centres that make up WDA.

The other two are WDA Americas www.wdaamericas.org and WDA Europe www.wda-europe.com. A fourth regional centre, WDA Africa, is in the process of establishing itself.

Networks

Based on specific areas of interest, these networks focus the activities of WDA and WDA – Asia Pacific. They are

- Education & Training
- Research & Documentation
- Creation & Presentation
- Welfare & Status
- Management & Promotion

Chapters

Countries or defined geographical areas within a regional centre may become Chapter members, providing information and coordinating the dance activities within their boundaries. They are important points in regional and global communication and networking.

These Chapters propose and implement projects, which address not only the general goals of WDA and WDA – Asia Pacific, but also the specific needs of the local dance community. The countries (chapters) in each WDA AP region are

- East Asia: Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong
- South-East Asia: Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Brunei, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Vietnam

- South Asia: India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives
- Pacific: Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, Hawaii, Samoa, French Polynesia, Palau, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands

Membership

Open to any organisation or individual interested in furthering the objectives of the society.

Benefits

- Biannual newsletter *Channels*
- Annual regional assemblies
- Biennial global assemblies
- Participation in the WDA – Asia Pacific Networks
- Discounts to certain member events
- Privileged access to WDA Americas and WDA Europe services and activities
- Networking opportunities

Types of membership and annual subscription fees
(*subject to change*)

- Chapter / Organisational US\$ 200
- Associate Organisational (to be advised)
- Associate Individual US\$ 20

To join

Contact your Chapter Head (contact list on back of this issue) for details on how to join the local chapter.

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