Dancing Doctorates Down-Under?

Defining and assessing 'doctorateness' when embodiment enters the thesis

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There is little argument when excellence, independent critical thought, and most particularly, originality are held as the assessment criteria of doctoral studies (Denicolo 2003; Pakes 2003, Powell & Green 2003; Cantwell & Scevak 2004, Brooks 2005, Piccini 2005, Barrett 2007). Ambiguity and agitation only emerge when those terms and their competency benchmarks are thrown into question and when examiners, often from discrete disciplinary and indeed institutional systems, are asked to state their judgements clearly.

The determination of value or assessment at doctoral and research masters' levels is the crucial feature of a collaborative project, *Dancing Between Diversity and Consistency: Refining Assessment in Postgraduate Degrees in Dance,* funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) and conducted by the authors over a two year period. The primary challenge prompting this research is to address issues of assessment legitimacy raised by the recent entry of practice-orientated dance studies into Australian higher degrees. Examining literal embodiment and presence, as opposed to cultural studies about states of embodiment, unsettles academic conventions, prompting questions of subjectivity and generating suspicion about corporeal intelligence/s and the reliability of artistic/aesthetic communications generally. Scrutiny of assessment in practice-based dance studies may provide a litmus test for standards and protocols across academic environments because dance research presents an exacerbated perspective on tensions already evident in academic examination processes. The story, as such, does not begin with dance but with questions of the status of knowledge and its principal conveyer, scriptural language[1].

Colliding knowledge and language systems

Human experience is such that, as Lyotard and Thébaud observe, 'one is caught up in a story, and one cannot get out of this story to take up a metalinguistic position from which the whole could be dominated' (Lyotard & Thébaud, 1985, p. 43). This self-embroiled perspective operates in tandem with Foucaultian ideas about the 'constructedness' of knowledge within institutional regulatory systems (Foucault, 1982) to highlight the complexity of acts of judgement and question long-held beliefs about objectivity, impartiality and 'truth'. This post-modern turn de-stabilises the hierarchy of meta-narratives and enables academia to embrace alternatives, like practice-based knowledge/s, but also provokes tensions and ongoing negotiations over expectations, conventions and power relations borne by the new membership.

A crucial feature of the 'doctorateness' of practice-based PhDs is the expectation that researchers have to navigate two distinct knowledge systems. In a visual arts context, Fiona Candlin examines governance of what she views as the conflicting competencies (and management matrices) of academia and the arts. 'The practice-based PhD … effectively posits that artists can speak from the positions previously occupied by academics alone. This inevitably creates problems concerning competence' (Candlin, 2000, n. p.). For Candlin, the performance-plus-exegesis model of practice-based degrees brings the two unlike systems in an uneasy compromise, where bias lies with the 'academic'. Candlin points to colliding values of alternative 'language' systems as much their power relations. Within academic parameters it is difficult to challenge the written word because the system, as it has been constructed, depends on words for documentation, explanation, analysis and disciplinary framing. Words are embedded in the system's conventions; in its conceptual understanding of thought.

However, an intrinsic property of words, the capacity to construct metaphors, complicates matters because metaphor enables 'language,' so often understood as constrained by its derivation from the Latin *lingua* 'tongue[2],' to be inclusive of other means of communication (image, sound, movement). Moreover metaphor, playing across words as much as across other meaning-making media, is fundamental to thought, arguably a neural capacity pre-dating the emergence of the language of words. While promoting agile thinking, metaphors equally introduce a Derridean slipperiness and imprecision into communicative acts, characteristics which run against the conceptual grain of knowledge in an academic domain. That unruliness of language and thought is most difficult for scholarship's management, particularly for consistency of standards in examination contexts which must be upheld in universities. These management systems involve disciplinary conventions as well as myriad layers of protocols that have emerged over time based on the 'reliability' of words.

'Spectating backwards and projecting forwards'

Such observations do not imply that integrating word and movement produces a negative union but that difficulties ensue as a result, not simply from words

themselves, but from the meshing of thought embedded in their usage. Susan Melrose's account of two incommensurable 'expert' systems, the 'spectating' academic of performance studies and the 'doing' of artist practitioners, exposes the complications arising from assuming either a writerly or a practicing position in terms of 'performance' knowledge. For Melrose, time is the qualifier:

> [It is] the irrepressible drive, of the archivist and the academic, to inscribe, describe, interpret, hence to practise temporal closure on what might otherwise be described as the work's openness, its residual unfinishedness, to the practitioners concerned; its necessary compromises, its constitutive dynamism, and its fragility - hence its status as non-identical with the perspectives of academic and archivist alike.
>
> (Melrose 2006, n.p.)

Consequently, the difficulties encountered by practice-based researchers may not only be concerned with words *per se* but with temporal interventions. Melrose's 'spectating' academic looks back to arrive at knowledge, whereas the artist practitioner projects forwards towards potential 'transformative events' to emergent knowledge.

Thus, in addition to the metaphorical agility of thought across media and the politicisation of Candlin's competencies, there is a spatio-temporal positioning veiled within the scriptural economy that practice-based candidates and examiners have to navigate. Perhaps it is not the language of words which is lacking but the way in which we think we think? There is, to use a movement metaphor, a counter motional tension involved wherein an expansiveness of thought is constrained by oppositional conventions pertaining to how thought is actualised.

Theory/practice interdependencies

One prominent example of how thinking needs to be carefully relayed by words is the expression 'theory and practice'. Melrose argues that 'enough expert academic writers … use the noun "theory" as though what it stood for were writerly and written' (Melrose 2003, n.p.) to confound the intentions of the practitioner researcher who theorises in the 'doing' and its reflection, some part of which may necessarily be framed in words. Practice generates and/or explores theory at the level of thought which can well be within the dancing body itself. Words are simply an alternative means by which such theorising can be expressed. However words tend to shape thought, so, to change how we think of theorising, we may need to banish the expression 'theory and practice.'

The *Dancing between Diversity and Consistency*'s interviews soliciting perceptions of candidates, supervisors and research deans provide a dialogue with intersecting systems like those identified by Candlin and Melrose. Many respondents are aware of the dual systems, principally because the combined practice and exegesis introduces the idea of double pedalling for doctoral candidates. Oppositions such as action and production

versus textual authority; performance's quintessential ephemerality versus research demands for durable inscription; and economic imbalances between university and the dance profession constantly emerge, but these tensions have nuances which can be revealing, especially when the issue of language is raised. One respondent mused that

> this idea from arts in general and this idea from sociology and this idea from computer science together and the language isn't sociology, it's not dance, it's not about practice; it's not about any of those things. It's another language altogether.
>
> (SE/QQt08)[3]

What this other language might be remains the ultimate challenge. However, envisaging alternatives does point to future means of conceptualising integrated collaborations where problems of the word 'language' are avoided. As another participant observes, over time a 'new strata of language' (C/QQt09) will emerge within which the discipline will operate.

An alternative knowledge system?

Some find objective 'academic' approaches incongruous with investigations that foreground the poetic potency of thought. Supervisors and candidates believe that there could be more flexibility in matching written language with the conceptual thought expressed in practice. Moreover, supervisors note that students can struggle with the 'one size fits all model' of practice-based research since investigating knowledge in the practice of dance may not necessarily be expressed in performance but in pedagogical, therapeutic or anthropological processes (SE/QQt08). Such comments highlight the need to pay attention to wording in formulating the guiding criteria for examination processes which is inclusive and not constrictive. Words chosen for criteria must be clear but encompassing of variation in *where* the knowledge under investigation may lie (product, process, inscription or a combination of such locations) and *what* type of language may explicate the knowledge. John Adams argues that

> material practice ('making things') encodes and embodies an intricate, integrated weave of intellectual and sensory perceptions that circumscribe and elude linguistic determination, although, of course, elements of a work may be extracted and located as an illustrative strand within discourse.
>
> (Adams, 2007, p. 206)

Critical reflection in words can 'recover' the work but when that reflection is confined to discourse through word there is a danger of

> exposing one aspect as it simultaneously represses or obscures other allusive strands located within the discourse; [thus] the power of paradox, resonance and allusion, which is the essence of constructive provocation, is systematically denied'
>
> (Adams, 2007, p. 215)

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In dance, movement articulation is a prized technical accomplishment that contributes to but does not fully explicate the meaning a particular movement might provoke. Reception of kinaesthetic intelligence is non-linear, not necessarily by the dance-maker's intention but because there is a complexity in human communication that enables paradox to seep into acts of engagement. Open-ended features typical of creative arts' inquiries can be apprehended within communicative environments and yet difficult to translate wholly into transparent words.

Claims to alternative apprehension of knowledge, as are expressed here, invite accusations of subjectivity and inattention to rigour, scientific-based proof and empirical-shaped arguments. Such perceptions imply that the arts are a kind of playground where serious applications of knowledge in words are abandoned in favour of experience and enjoyment. Interestingly, the professional and academic dance community currently express an overwhelming affirmation of critical dialogue as crucial to the art form's well-being. Supervisors and candidates underplay creative features and emphasise instead the intellectual capacities of practice. No doubt the implied intellectualism of the study itself prompted such responses but this emphasis might also be explained by dancers' sense of inadequacy and unfamiliarity within higher degree contexts and/or by the impediments to understanding embodied knowledge that assumptions embedded in word language tend to emphasise. There may also be a peculiarly Australian slant to the perceptions received. In contrast to European culture, dance is not considered to be a subject for general debate but something obscure and esoteric. Consequently, there is a need for legitimisation which university environments can give. This situation provokes both a need to comply with the rigour of academic structures and perhaps, fortuitously, a need to explore the thought/language/conceptualisation issues to a depth required by higher degree studies.

The latter consideration, interestingly, featured strongly in discussion with the professional sector on their perceptions of the nexus between the dance industry and academe. Their views similarly highlight benefits and tensions arising from the meeting of the two institutionalised systems without detracting from the potential of a genuine dialogic partnership.

Industry / Academy relationships – an Australian perspective

Our research reveals that industry/academy relationships are critical to issues of language and legitimacy. To understand how these relationships impact on higher degrees in dance, we conducted 74 in-depth interviews nationally with deans/directors of research, supervisors, examiners and candidates and also sought industry perspectives through five public forums hosted by Ausdance in Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane.[4] The Forums, entitled *Is there any value in higher degrees in dance?,* attracted predominantly independent dance artists and postgraduate students, as well as studio teachers, dance academics, dance company members, administrators and community workers.

Discussion and responses from industry were on the whole optimistic and positive, mostly without the suspicion which can be prevalent between the industry and academe. This is arguably because so much professional dance training in Australia occurs in undergraduate conservatory courses within the university sector, unlike in many parts of the world where dancers are trained in separate academies.[5] Fluidity is therefore characteristic of relations between industry and academe, marked over the last decade by an increasing number of dance artists who are seeking to enrol in higher degrees, as well as by dance professionals making work and teaching into academic dance programs.

Whilst individual responses differed, our analysis revealed a surprising consensus between industry and academic responses around four predominant areas related to the purpose and value of doctoral and postgraduate research comprising: deepening/extending practice; embodiment and articulation of practice; validation/status; and dissemination of knowledge in multiple forms.

Deepening / extending practice

Both interview and forum respondents agreed that one of the main values of doctoral study for artists was that it offers a 'state of immersion' (Perth Forum) not available in industry settings; providing in-depth investigations which enable risk-taking and experimentation, seen as vital to dance innovation and development. A research dean spoke of practice-led doctorates providing 'two routes of study and understanding' through deepening practice and interrogating practice (DD/QQt01). In response to questioning the 'need' for practitioners to have academic qualifications, one supervisor concurred that 'artists should use the academy to make better art, not to become academics', also stating that 'the academy can and should be an incubator of new work' (SE/NSy02). Most interviewees agreed that the sustained investigative practice available in research higher degrees is beneficial to the industry (VDe03) particularly for mature artists; a perception supported by the number of mature age Australian enrolments in practice-based higher degrees (Brisbane Forum).

Industry respondents and candidates also took a pragmatic view of the benefits of working in academia, stating that they would/did enrol because of access to studio space, technical resources and regular mentoring from peers and supervisors. Brisbane Forum artists even suggested that the university has become a 'company substitute' in a landscape of decreasing professional opportunities. With more artists seeking to embed their artistic work in an academic context, the academy is now being squeezed in its ability to adequately respond to their resource demands, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. It is timely to consider the suggestion of one candidate (C/QQt03) that the synergy between both sectors be further developed through co-funded scholarships which would maximise resources.

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Embodiment and articulation of practice

From the industry perspective, it was accepted that embodied practice is a legitimate form of language and inquiry, but the articulation of practice into text was viewed as problematic. However, it was also generally agreed that one needs to grapple with the articulation of practice; that the practice on its own does not constitute doctoral research. A concern was raised at the Brisbane Forum as to whether research higher degrees can enhance practice itself or merely the articulation of that practice. Candidate interviewees also mentioned an inherent tension in how academia changes the way one thinks about practice (SE/VDe05; C/WEd10; C/QQt06). This counters the accepted notion that more investigative time will automatically enrich and 'improve' practice.

Forum participants believed that doctoral study provides methodologies that enable artists to organise thoughts and reflections about their practices, as 'a way [of] illuminating the practice and work for others' (Brisbane and Melbourne). In Australian doctoral research, the reflective practitioner model in which the artist and researcher is one and the same person is prevalent. This model, together with the embodied nature of dance and its particular integration of mind and body, makes dance a potential leader in blending worded articulation with practice. An alternative model was posited by both industry and academia for a 'joint' or collaborative doctorate in which an academic researcher is attached to practitioners, collaborating to provide differing approaches and outcomes to the same research topic, in a dialogic researcher/artist relationship.[6]

Validation and status

When it came to questions of dancing doctorates providing status and legitimacy, views differed markedly. One view was that industry and the academy 'should avoid seeking legitimacy through one another' (C/WEd10), whilst nevertheless finding areas of mutual benefit. Another academic spoke of a relational flow between the two sectors where 'artists come in and do higher degrees and feed that back into industry; industry people come in and work as lecturers. There should not be any distinction' (SE/WEd16). Nevertheless one notable distinction was that observed between artistic excellence in the industry and academic excellence about and around practice, which were seen as complementary but not the same.

Status issues emerged through the ongoing clichéd perception in academia of the dancer being physically but not verbally articulate versus the dance industry viewing academia as impenetrable and jargon-laden (CG/QQt04). Research higher degrees were seen as a way of raising the status of dance and 'validating dance as a cultural practice' (Adelaide Forum). Research was also thought to 'give definition to the identity of Australian dance at home and within international contexts' (Perth Forum). Comments at the Brisbane and Adelaide Forums suggested research also validated dance through community and capacity building, and by producing 'articulate advocates for the art form'. On the other hand, some artists with doctorates reported

negative responses by industry in that they were sometimes viewed with suspicion as no longer being 'real' artists.

Production and dissemination of knowledge

Industry saw the production of new knowledge through doctoral study as an important contribution to academia, particularly in the primacy of movement as a way of knowing the world which 'legitimises kinaesthetic intelligence' (Perth Forum). Knowledge transfer was seen as a two-way process by forum participants who emphasised what dance can bring to other fields, as well as how the articulation of critical ideas by writers and scholars can disseminate new ideas and approaches in the dance field.

Both sectors viewed interdisciplinarity in the university context as a platform to move dance beyond the specific to applied areas such as animation, health, therapy, gender studies, architecture (perceptions of space) and cognitive science. Such collaboration 'is invigorating for dance and our understandings about our practices' as well as producing transferable skills for other contexts (Brisbane Forum). A Perth participant also observed that 'embracing other disciplines through academic study breaks down practitioners' inclinations to self-referentiality'. In a similar vein, it was thought that 'irritants to work can be positive' and that making rigorous and productive work in the academy should involve both 'symbiosis and abrasion' (Brisbane Forum).

The industry sector is critical of the lack of broad dissemination of university research which tends to stay within academic contexts (Sydney Forum). Research, especially doctoral theses, needs disseminating, to private and public sectors, with greater open on-line access, more performances outside university venues, and more collaborative projects and facilitated workshops around shared interests between industry and academe.

Challenges of 'treading between two worlds' (Vvt01)

Despite a predominantly positive relationship between industry and academia, tensions remain. One candidate remarked that academic cynicism of industry's intellectual rigour can prevent new knowledge entering the academy and this 'academic elitism can be a turn off for the industry' (C/WEd04). Related to this is the issue of self-esteem and confidence for an artist entering academia, which 'can be daunting when one does not know or understand the language' (Brisbane Forum). Appropriate mentoring to make the transition from an industry to an academic artist was recommended in most forums.

Finding the right balance for dancing doctorates is desired by both sectors but not easy to achieve. Many interviewees pointed out that whilst symbiosis and synergies are the ideal relationship where complementary but different practices are respected, in actuality there is need for continual negotiation to free-up entrenched paradigms and approaches (DD/SSa02) (C/QQt09) (C/QQt06). A particular challenge for PhDs in choreography is access to the appropriate level of dancers, which is often dictated by economics, as not

everyone has access to industry networks and contacts and, consequently, choreographic doctorates invariably work with undergraduate students as performers (SE/VDe05).

Examining the dancing doctorate

One of the most contentious issues was the question of industry examiners for doctorates. Opposing views and practices are widespread, with some universities only allowing examiners with PhDs to examine and some employing a mixture of academic and industry examiners. A common reason for not considering an industry examiner was that 'to examine a PhD, it is necessary to have a PhD in order to understand the discipline and complexity that's needed' (SE/NSy01). One supervisor felt that 'an industry person will go with what resonates from an industry point of view' (SE/QSq01), whilst a candidate expressed the view that industry examiners would need to invest time to understand the academic framework (C/QQt07).

Other academics, however, advocated for a real world perspective brought by industry examiners who situate the work in the field, as well as provide post-examination contact between the candidate and industry professionals to encourage future opportunities (CG/QQt07; SE/QQu01). Other participants noted that the intellectual work of dance professionals can be extremely rigorous and rich, bringing knowledge beyond that of non-vocationally experienced academics to the examination process (SE/SSa02; C/QQt07; C/SAd02).

It was generally agreed that 'a theoretical academic favours the exegesis' (SE/WCu01) whereas professional practitioners with experience of academia will concentrate on the work rather than on the exegetical writing (SE/WCu01; C/WEd10). In an ideal world both these perspectives would be encompassed in one person. As a supervisor commented: 'I would choose someone who has been through the postgraduate experience and understands the journey but who are also practitioners grounded in the practice perspective' (SE/QQt10). Other universities solve the dilemma by employing one academic and one industry examiner, with a third hopefully across both areas or to provide a mediating voice.

Given all of the above issues, complexities and challenges what is the purpose and value of a dancing doctorate? One research Dean envisages the creative practice-led doctorate as pivotal to promoting change in the industry.

> The PhD graduate is a change agent, a leader, an innovator able to be picked up by industry…. [and] should be viewed by industry as a source for new ideas, for new works. I would like to see a situation where works developed in the context of doctoral degrees at universities have a subsequent life in industry…. collaborative research projects between industry and universities where the PhD level work is the creative development phase of something that can then be picked up and commercialised.
>
> (DD/QQt16)

Candidates' views – the next generation

The views of current dance higher degree candidates provide a basis for understanding the effects of the complex issues of language, legitimacy and industry relationships described above, on the state of play 'in the trenches'. The perceptions of the next generation of Australian dance researchers and the approaches they have developed to the problems of 'treading between two worlds' provide a basis for speculation on the future directions of Australian dance research.

Candidates interviewed for this study identified three main reasons for undertaking research degrees; deepening their practice, enhancing their employment prospects and undertaking intellectual enquiry. Deepening practice was overwhelmingly the most common, reported by approximately 60% of candidates, demonstrating the dominance of practice-oriented approaches in the field. While this result may be skewed by the prevalence of practice-based programs in Australia, this only reinforces the idea that practice is entrenched as an integral component of dance higher degrees in Australia, and, by implication, in the future of Australian dance research. This result also demonstrates a synergy between the needs of industry practitioners, who also articulated deepening practice as one of the major benefits of higher degrees, and the practice-oriented approaches to research degrees being developed by Australian universities.

Enhancing employment prospects was the second most prevalent reason cited by candidates for undertaking a higher degree. While some respondents saw this as a result of deepening practice and enhanced ability to articulate their work, many referred to the value of undertaking a research degree in enhancing academic employment prospects. Higher degrees are hence implicated in providing both employment in the dance sector and resources for (and aesthetic influence on) artistic development.

The third reason for undertaking higher degree research in dance was to undertake intellectual enquiry. The embedded-ness of intellectual enquiry into practice-oriented research in candidates' responses was striking. 'Newness' was integral to candidates' perceptions of 'doctorateness' and interchangeably across 'practice' and 'writing'. Comments such as 'you're versed and you are able to stand up and argue against any point that may come up' (WEd04) and 'it's not only coherent as an argument, but it expresses (your practice) in a completely different or a new way' (WEd17), referred interchangeably to 'practical' and 'written' aspects of the thesis.

While tensions and fears were articulated, the absence of resistance to the notion of intellectual enquiry, applied across both practical and written aspects of dance research, was compelling. Fluidity between industry and academy and between 'practice' and 'writing' seemed to be assumed. Candidates were willing to accept that the practices of thinking, writing and dancing would converge in a synergistic way, even if that process proved somewhat difficult or problematic. While one interpretation of this might be that candidates are simply following the guidelines of the research degree models in which they

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are enrolled, the striking enthusiasm of many participants causes us to suggest that these candidates are 'living out' the dualities between writing and dancing, doing and observing, that Candlin and Melrose suggest. Given the challenges, ambiguities and tensions between languages, epistemologies, practices, systems of thought, logistics and institutional politics involved, the degree of synergy and integration of embodied, physical, artistic practice and analytical, 'academic' inquiry in Australian higher degree candidates' views is an unexpected finding.

Higher degrees in dance in Australia have emerged over the last fifteen years, embracing, in this short timeframe, a complex, tension-filled and ambitious agenda of integrating dance practice into academic research. To examine higher degrees in this context, which also involves the challenge of a relatively small pool of qualified examiners, requires an ability and willingness to think across a range of aesthetics and genres and to evaluate across a range of conceptual frameworks. Doctoral assessment in this context requires a pioneering, risk-taking spirit – in the words of one of our respondents,

> people who are prepared to go the journey of this field in as far as its entry into research is concerned … so you're looking to the examiners to be risk takers in some senses as much as the candidates themselves.
>
> (DD/QQt16)

This reflection encapsulates the general sense of excitement we encountered across the interview and forum responses about embodiment's entry into the thesis. These perceptions suggest that, in spite of the difficulties of embedding enquiry through dance practice within an academic structure that is dominated by textual language, both candidates and their assessors in Australia are finding innovative ways to bridge the divide. Our findings suggest that the synergistic interests of industry and academy in deepening dance practices through research outweigh the tensions created by the subtlety different notions of artistic excellence, and of what actually constitutes 'deepened' practice, inside and outside the academy. The views of many of our respondents point, both implicitly and explicitly, to the value to dance innovation of placing dance research in the challenging epistemological environment of the academy. Indeed, our respondents suggest that, in spite of the difficulties and dangers ahead, the dancing doctorate is an interrogative endeavour which can but nurture the art form and forge a beneficial dynamism between those who seek and those who assess the emerging knowledge/s of dance.

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Notes

[1] 'Scriptural language' is adopted from Melrose's use of Michel de Certeau's term, which points to the role of words in the universities' control of the knowledge economy (Melrose, 2003). It use here is a means of emphasising the written word's hierarchical status.

[2] http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/language?view=uk

[3] Participant acknowledgment in this paper follows the coding of each interviewee devised for data-entry into the NVivo system used for our qualitative analysis.

[4] Ausdance is Australia's dance service and advocacy organisation which has a broad-based membership from all areas of the dance industry.

[5] For example all three major university institutions for dance training in this country were led, until recently, by former Artistic Directors of leading professional dance companies (Nanette Hassall at West Australian Academy of Performing Arts (founding Artistic Director of Dance Works); Jenny Kinder at Victorian College of the Arts (founding Artistic Director of Tasdance) and Cheryl Stock at QUT (founding Artistic Director of Dance North).

[6] Examples include Australian Research Council funded projects such as *Conceiving Connections* where the team comprises a cognitive psychologist, a PhD student in psychology, an eminent dance researcher and artist researchers, including a choreographer undertaking her MA; and the *Ballets Russes* project in which the Australian Ballet, guest choreographers and academic researchers are collaborating towards joint research and artistic outcomes.

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Biographical statements

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Associate Professor Cheryl Stock PhD, holds a research position at Queensland University of Technology's Creative Industries, teaching and publishing in the fields of contemporary and Asian dance, interdisciplinary collaboration, intercultural and site-specific performance, and research methodologies. Cheryl was founding Artistic Director of Dance North (1984-1995) and served as QUT's Head of Dance from 2000 until 2006. In 2003 she received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Australian Dance Awards for outstanding contributions to dance as a choreographer, director, writer and leader in tertiary dance education. In 2008 Cheryl convened the World Dance Alliance Global Summit and in 2009 was appointed Secretary General of World Dance Alliance.

Associate Professor Kim Vincs PhD, is the Director of the Deakin Motion.Lab, which she established in 2006. Dr Vincs' research interests are in motion capture, dance and interactive technology and integrating practice-led artistic research with quantitative, scientific methods. Current projects include developing new mathematical methods for analysing movement signatures using motion capture data, creating dance/motion capture performances using stereoscopic projection and measuring audience response to dance. Kim also teaches motion capture at Deakin University and directs for commercial motion capture projects. She was awarded two national Australian Council of Teaching and Learning awards in 2006 for her work in dance and motion capture.