



## **Student Information**

### **Excerpt from an interview with Former Artistic Director, Maggi Sietsma AM, about *Dream Hunters* (1993)**

#### **How did the initial concept for *Dream Hunters* come about?**

I was doing some study for my Masters degree and I came across a lot of Manray photographs and I became curious about Surrealism. Then I heard there was to be a surrealist exhibition in Brisbane and so thought it would be interesting to create a dance work in response to the proposed Revolution By Night exhibition.

#### **Did the initial concept change once you started rehearsals?**

No. We always kept in mind that surrealism was the starting point for the work and we tried to keep a lot of the philosophical ideas of Surrealism underpinning the work as well as using many of the associated techniques such as collage, random movement, chance, bricolage, montage, juxtaposition etc. in our exploration of new movement.

#### **How did surrealism stimulate you in the creation of dream hunters?**

The use of associated techniques just mentioned was one way and I immersed myself in the art work (i.e. the writings, literature, films, paintings, sculptures etc.) of the Surrealists. I also tried to comprehend in an historical sense their manifestos and philosophies, as I thought it was important for me to know and understand where they were coming from. And then I tried to work as I believed they worked i.e. intuitively. I allowed Surrealism to stimulate my creativity in a variety of ways, both visually and conceptually.

#### **The work is based on the theme of power, in what way?**

Power in lots of different ways - political power, sexual power, social power, psychological power.

#### **Why did you choose this as the theme?**

Because in an historical sense the Surrealists were revolting against power, they were anti-establishment. Society at that time was going through a lot of power struggles - class struggles, political struggles with the rise of the Nazi movement etc. and I believe it (power) would be the link to hold the aural and visual elements of the work together. The scope of surrealism is immense so I needed something to confine the work and taking a theme on which to base the work did this.

#### **What is the purpose of the work?**

Because the Surrealists created works of art that required the perceiver to respond in a personal way, I wanted to create a work in which the audience was invited to use their own imagery and personal experiences to decipher the work. Because our society tends to block off imaginative responses I wanted to ignite the audience's senses to enable them to get in touch with their "other self" or their unconscious. Andre Breton wrote in 1921: "Surrealism is the marvellous faculty of attaining two widely separate realities without departing from the



realm of our experience, of bringing them together and drawing a spark from their contact" and this is what I was trying to do.

**You say *Dream Hunters* is a collaborative work. What does this mean?**

Collaboration is where a number of people are responsible for the creation of the work. I worked closely with a number of people including Jennifer Flowers who co-directed and Abel Valls who composed the musical score. Greg Clarke who designed the set and costumes, Frances Macken who designed the lights and of course the dancers who contributed many ideas for movement and text throughout the working process. In this process many ideas are generated but as director and choreographer I had the responsibility of sorting, sifting and deciding on what would be used and what would be discarded. Jennifer's role was that of a dramaturge. Her main focus was to ensure that the theatrical intention was always clear (obviously her vocal coaching was also enormously important).

**What is to be gained most by collaborating on a dance work? Were there any drawbacks or negative aspects?**

Yes, I did enjoy collaborating, I always enjoy collaborating. What you gain is a greater pool of ideas and therefore a richer end result. In this production I don't feel there were any drawbacks or negative aspects. However, in the past I have come across ego problems i.e. artists not wanting to compromise their ideas or pool their resources. Therefore, I am now very careful about who I collaborate with otherwise it can be a very tense and unfruitful experience.

***Dream Hunters* is said to be a work of "dance theatre". What do you mean by "dance theatre"?**

For me, "dance theatre" is a synthesis of dance and theatre. A synthesis which is so homogenous that it results in a new form and/or language.

**Why have you decided to work in this way rather than just dance?**

My choreographic evolution which has resulted in "dance theatre" has arisen through my boredom with pure dance. I have personally explored as far as possible, abstract dance and movement for movement sake. Using text in dance was a natural progression for me. I really like to create works that have some emotional and intellectual depth. I need to feel challenged.

**Is this the first work you have created using text?**

No. I first started using text in *Dust* which was created in 1989. At first just the odd word or two was included but with each work I have created since then using text, I have explored its use in greater depth and detail.

**How has your work developed to bring you to where you are today?**

I've always been concerned with the human condition when creating works for Expressions. For example the first work I created for Expressions, *Snow Drops*, was about drug addiction. I've always liked purity of line but at the same time abandoning the safety of centre. By this I



mean I enjoy, both kinesthetically and visually, the sense of falling off balance and recovering to a centred, balanced line.

**What or who do you feel have been major influences on your choreographic development?**

There have been many influences throughout my dance career. During my time as a performer I had the privilege to work with Anthony Tudor. His psychological dance works inspired me enormously and are perhaps a reason why I am so concerned with the human condition. The choreographic processes of Murray Louis acted as a catalyst in shaping my early choreographic development. Working in an avant garde French theatre company was also instrumental in influencing my current choreographic processes. My study of Tai Chi and Indonesian classical dance lead me to discover the world of modern dance due to their similarities in the use of gravity, breath energy and momentum. Currently I find visual art and film influence me.

**Do you have a clear vision as to where your choreographic development is headed in the future?**

Each new work I create is a voyage of discovery. I will continue my exploration of the synthesis of text and dance, for at least the next 12 months. If I knew where I wanted to go I probably wouldn't want to do it.