



Program Updated 30-10-2025

Haunted?

Locating the Spectral in Australasian Ballet

A One-day Symposium, October 31, 2025
Forum Theatre, Level 1, Arts West Building
University of Melbourne

Symposium email: ballet-history@unimelb.edu.au



*Roger Kemp, Figure in Action - Ballet Series, c.1936-1940. Unsigned, oil on card.
Private collection, with permission kindly granted by the Kemp family*

The Organising Committee wishes to acknowledge the support of:

The Australian Ballet

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Archive for the Future*, K M Christensen and E A Bond Bequest, Victorian College of the Arts

Program

31 October 2025, Forum Theatre

8:30-9:00	Registration
9:00-9:15	Welcome
9:15-10:30	<p>Session 1: <i>Haunted Histories: Ballet as a Lens on National Memory</i></p> <p><i>How has Australian ballet engaged the nation's shifting historical consciousness, from pastoral mythmaking to the echoes of overseas conflicts? How have choreographers staged both celebrations and critiques of that consciousness? These four papers examine local histories and international influences against a ghostly backdrop of diverse cultural identities.</i></p> <p>Dr Jeanette Mollenhauer, Unity Dance Group: Margaret Walker, Classical Ballet and Applying Communist Ideals in Australian Dance</p> <p>Dr Christine de Matos, Spectres of Australia's War History: <i>G'Day Digger!</i> and <i>1914</i></p> <p>Yvette Grant, A Triple Haunting: Valrene Tweedie's 1957 Australian ballet, <i>Wakooka</i></p> <p>Chair: Prof Rachel Fensham</p>
10:30-11:00	Morning tea
11:00-12:30	<p>Session 2: <i>Material Presences, Unseen Forces</i></p> <p><i>From the textures of costumes and prints to the invisible hierarchies of the rehearsal studio and the boardroom, these papers examine the tangible and intangible forces shaping Australian ballet. Together, they reveal how material objects, economic pressures and embedded traditions act as ghosts, carrying forward histories of cultural appropriation, gendered codes, and institutional authority even as artists seek to reframe or resist them.</i></p> <p>Dr Emily Collett, Tricksters and Agitators: The ghosts of ballet costume</p> <p>Debra Winn, Spectral Traces: Monotype and the Memory of Movement</p> <p>Dr Gareth Belling, Dead Dreams and Monetary Men: Or, How money haunts the directorships of Australian ballet companies</p> <p>Serena Graham, 'Between Flesh and Tulle': Ghosting Identity, Inherited Mime, and the White Skirt in Ballet</p> <p>Chair: Dr Derrick Brown-Appenzeller</p>
12:30-1:15	<p>Cameos I</p> <p>Anne Butler, Fantastic Vegetable Garden: Unearthing Dancer/Choreographer Noelle Aitken, Costume/Decor Designer Wendy Tamlyn, and Composer Edith Harry</p> <p>Liz Lea, The Spirit of 120 birds</p> <p>Andreas Boyde, Ghosts in Masks: The Film Fragments of <i>Le Carnaval</i></p> <p>Chair: Dr Caitlyn Lehmann</p>
1:15-2:00	Lunch

2:00-2:30	<p>The Spectral Journey of Deconstructed Classics: Kialea-Nadine Williams in discussion with Dr Siobhan Murphy</p> <p><i>Kialea-Nadine Williams is a former dancer with Australian Dance Theatre. This session will feature short video presentations of ADT works choreographed by Garry Stewart, including G and Birdbrain.</i></p>
2:30-3:10	<p>Cameos II</p> <p>Jane Andrewartha, Shining a light on the spirit of <i>Mathinna</i>: A Shadowy Tale Laced with Australian Colonialism and the Cultural Cringe</p> <p>Blazenka Brysha, 'Ballet Wars'</p> <p>Judy Leech, <i>Peter and the Wolf</i>: From Russia to Rambert and Reid</p> <p>Chair: Jarryd Madden</p>
3:10-3:30	Afternoon tea
3:30-5:10	<p>Session 3: Ex(o/e)rcising Classical Ghosts</p> <p><i>The papers in this session confront the spirits of Swan Lake, Giselle and Petrushka, and how their colonial trappings and choreographic spells can be unsettled by contemporary storytellers. The authors trace the ways in which artists confront inherited phantoms – through decolonial re-visioning, Indigenous collaborations and theatrical exorcisms – looking forward to futures where ballet's ghosts are neither silenced nor obeyed but transformed.</i></p> <p>Dr Maggie Tonkin, The Mad Scene and its Afterlives: Re-imaginings of <i>Giselle</i> in Meryl Tankard's <i>Two Feet</i> and Garry Stewart's <i>G</i></p> <p>Dr Andrew Fuhrmann, The Ghost of Petrushka's Ballerina: Body Image and Choreographic Possession in Lucy Guerin's <i>The Dark Chorus</i></p> <p>Dr Ellin Sears, Reframing Colonial Histories through Ballet: Discussions on WA Ballet's <i>Swan Lake</i> (2022)</p> <p>Dr Priya Srinivasan, Truths Stranger than Orientalist Fantasy and Fiction: South Asian Hauntings of <i>La Bayadere</i></p> <p>Chair: Prof Carol Brown</p>
5:10-5:30	Short break
5:30-7:00	<p>Panel Discussion</p> <p>Reckoning and Reflection: Intergenerational voices in Australasian ballet</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janet Karin OAM • Nicole Corea • Lynette Wills • Tammi Gisell • Serena Graham <p>Chair: Dr Gareth Belling, with Yvette Grant</p> <p><i>Janet Karin is a former principal dancer of The Australian Ballet and an acclaimed educator, widely recognised for her contributions to the teaching of dance.</i></p>

	<p><i>Nicole Corea is a Juilliard-trained dancer who spent 25 years performing with leading international companies. She is also an accomplished independent choreographer.</i></p>
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Lynette Wills is a former principal dancer with The Australian Ballet and an educator who taught at The Australian Ballet School for over 15 years.

Tammi Gisell is a Muruwari and Wiradjuri woman, performer, poet, theorist, choreographer and collections co-ordinator at the Powerhouse Museum

Serena Graham is an artist with The Australian Ballet. She was promoted to coryphée in 2024.

Programme update: we regret that the planned interview with Garry Stewart is no longer able to go ahead. We know many of you were looking forward to this, and we appreciate your understanding.