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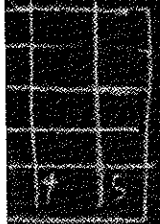
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FROM BE

# Rafael Bonachela

The **Sydney Dance Company's** new head is about to unveil his first work as artistic director. He tells *Nick Dent* how he got here, his vision for the company, and why Kylie loves him

## Rafael, what are your plans for the SDC?

I'm creating one work a year minimum and I'm inviting guest choreographers. I'll be giving the company its stamp and identity, but at the same time I want my dancers to enjoy working with other choreographers. I also want us to be touring the world. That hasn't happened for a long time, and that's one of my missions.

## There must have been a lot of competition to get this job...

It was the hot job at the time. There are not many opportunities for a choreographer to run a middle-to-large scale dance company that has a constant group of 16 dancers. It's a very well established company that has a legacy.

**Did you meet with [former co-artistic director and founder] Graeme Murphy?** I got a postcard from him and Janet [Vernon] wishing me all the best and that was very sweet. To know that the person who has made such an impact in dance in Sydney, Australia and the world is supportive of my appointment, it's very good.

**What does this company have to show the world?** Australian dancers are very athletic and for me, I'm very focused on the physicality of dance – I would say there's a lot of dance in my dance!

**You ruffled a lot of feathers when you sacked seven of the company last year though.** It's very common that for any new artistic directorship there will be changes. It's just life. And dance is something that you don't do forever. At a professional level it has a sell-by date.

**Were you into dance as a child?** Always. I was born in a small town outside Barcelona and there was not a dance school so I used to get some music and make my own steps, with my brothers as well. It wasn't until much later on that I realised that it had a name: choreography. And when I was 15 my

parents let me take the train to classes. After three years I did an audition for a contemporary dance company in Barcelona and got the job. I was 17. I wasn't a trained dancer but I had talent. Also, there were not many male dancers at the time, so that helped!

When I left the job I got a scholarship and went to the London Studio Centre. That was a

always been there for some strange reason. That's why this [job] feels so right! Rambert was a company that gave the opportunity to in-house dancers to create work. I went to the director and said, "I've made a piece." He watched it and said, "I'm going to put it on at Sadler's Wells next November." Which is the biggest dance venue in London. I did the

shows and I got an email from William Baker, creative director for Kylie, saying, "We loved your show, you're what we're looking for, I'd like you to choreograph for Kylie."

Kylie and William wanted changes from the typical synchronised

pop show and they took a chance on me. I'll never forget that. When I came out of doing the *Fever* tour I was a different person. The first time I came to Sydney was with Kylie.

**What's she like as a dancer?** She's a beautiful mover. She has an incredible, natural, sensual flair. She's a quick learner, and always suggesting things. Working with her was a true pleasure.

I think Kylie helps people realise that contemporary dance is not scary. The boundaries between serious art and pop culture are integrating a lot more. I think there are people walking around Sydney who don't even know they love contemporary dance and the way for me to attract audiences is to bring in other elements, like from pop culture.

**What can we expect from your first dance piece as director of the company?** It uses a new piece of music, a symphony, and the composer is Italian – Ezio Bosso. I used two of his pieces in *360°*. It's classical contemporary music, very emotional strings that I love, really powerful. The title, *We Unfold*, is about moving on, stretching out. There is a lot in that title for me.

► *Sydney Dance Company's We Unfold opens at the Sydney Theatre on 31 Mar. See Performing Arts listings for details.*

"There are people walking around Sydney who don't even know they love contemporary dance"

school like *Fame* – six classes a day – and my obsession became even worse. And after two years I joined [leading British dance company] Rambert. I got to work with some of the most incredible choreographers in the world.

**How did you end up working with Kylie Minogue?** My connection with Australia has

## Life & times

1972 Born in La Garriga, Spain

1986 Has first dance lesson in Barcelona

1990 Attends London Studio Centre

1992 Joins Rambert Dance Company

2002 Choreographs Kylie's *Fever* tour. Two more tours follow

2006 Launches Bonachela Dance Company; appointed artist in residence at Southbank Centre, London

2008 Creates *360°* for Sydney Dance Company

2009 Formally appointed SDC artistic director; stages *We Unfold*

# The Bridge

From us to you, all the news that's fit to print... plus soft fruit, hard flexing, high flats and a fistful o' Fun Bucks

## Rant & rave

### We're impressed...

With the way that so many of the nation's retailers are suddenly offering deals on various goods for the low, low price of \$900! And just before we get our Kevin Rudd Fun Bucks too: what a stunning coincidence!

### We're sick to death...

Of the increasingly lame attempts to sell water-with-stuff-in-it. Hey, beverage retail: if you want us to think about our "sensible", maybe it should look a bit more delicious and a bit less like a slimy alien foetus.

### We're relieved...

That capitalism isn't dead despite the global economic crisis, according to former HIH head Rodney Adler. And heck, if you can't take advice from a man who did two and a half years in prison for corporate fraud, from whom can you take advice?

### We're sleeping better...

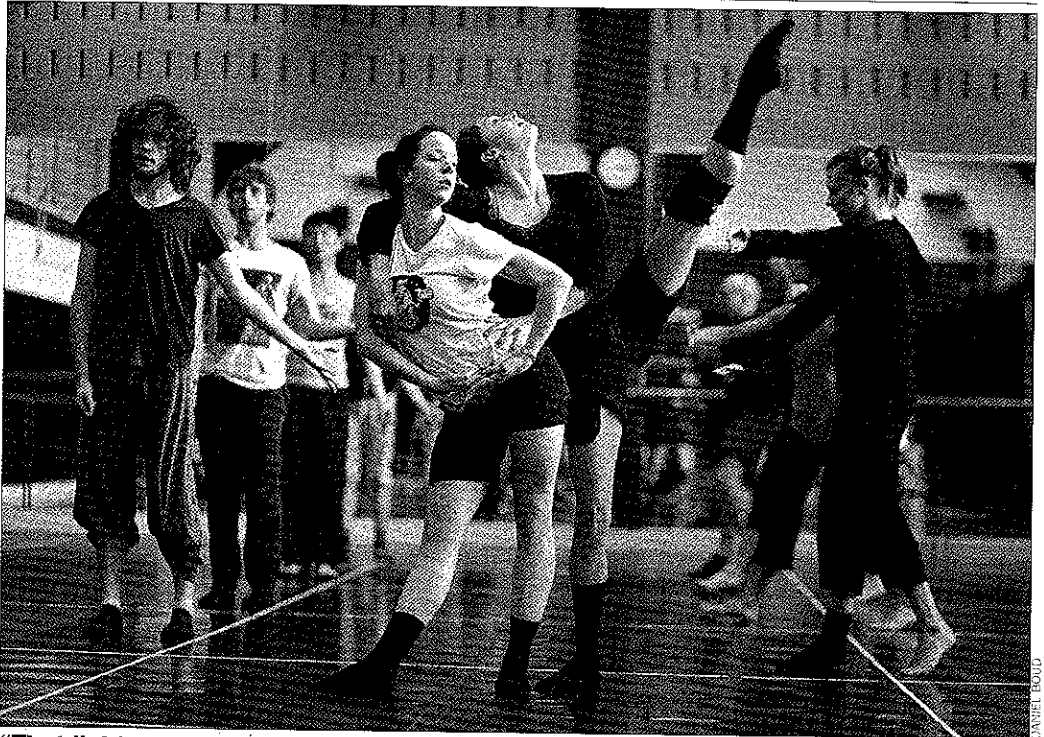
Knowing that the NSW police are keeping us safe by secretly monitoring our activities under the new covert operation laws passed in Parliament. Sure, civil libertarians might warn against the dangers of a police state answerable to no one, but the fact that police can secretly search our homes and hack into our computers means THE LAWS ARE GOOD AND POLICE ARE NICE THANK YOU HANDSOME PREMIER NATHAN REES

### We're relieved...

That plucky little start-up company Telstra have found a way to make an honest buck by charging in 30 second blocks rather than per second for STD and international calls. It's certainly not blatant profiteering off older, less tech-savvy customers who don't know about, say, Skype: no, that's premier customer care!

rants@timeoutsydney.com.au

## Scene in Sydney



"That light needs replacing" Sydney Dance Company rehearse *We Unfold*, the first show under Rafael Bonachela's directorship (see p24). It opens Tue 31 Mar at Sydney Theatre

## Please explain...

**What's the deal with all those fruit stalls around the city?** Leah, via email

Maybe it's the sight of gridlocked Market Street, or maybe it's those persistent smells, but we too have thought twice about buying "city fruit".

According to the City of Sydney Council, fruit barrows are a long-standing tradition, existing in various forms throughout the CBD for over 100 years. They hit saturation point following World



War II, when life gave returned servicemen lemons – and they decided to sell them to make money.

The street kiosks you see today were built before the Sydney Olympics in 2000 to provide a safe lockup storage facility with less vandalism, theft and damage. There are 60 street vending kiosks around today, and about 20 of them are selling fruit – so we say it's time to get fruity and support the little guy. *Sam Basger*

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