



MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia Council funds shearers ballet in Cowra

The rituals, gestures and actions of the shearing shed will be fuel for a new theatre and dance performance, *The Shearer's Ballet*, performed by men and women who were once active in the wool trade as shearers, handlers and wool classers.

"The language of the shearing industry has a jargon to rival that of ballet," director Patrick Nolan said, "but instead of terms like arabesque, battement and fouette we have crutching, fadge and dagging and many more besides."

Developed in the Cowra area of Central West NSW, the unique regional project has attracted \$35,200 funding from the federal government's Australia Council for the Arts. It is the latest, exciting component of the SILOS Project that will culminate in a major community performance event in 2017.

Starting with interviews about the shearers' experiences, then exploring a physical language that draws upon these memories, the final collaborative work will evoke a life that, in the words of 72-year-old retired shearer Norm Palazzi, "could be as brutal as it was poetic".

Patrick Nolan as director and Alison Plevy as choreographer will lead the performance development. Composer Scott Saunders will work with a local musician on the soundscape. This professional team have all worked extensively in regional Australia and bring a great empathy and passion for creating work with community artists. They have worked closely with the Cowra and Canowindra communities since 2013 through previous phases of the SILOS Project.

"Working with aging bodies, the piece draws upon the actions of a shearing shed that have now all but disappeared, celebrating the physical demands of the job," choreographer Alison Plevy said, "The agility, athleticism and necessary repetition. And, like a ballet, the grace and precision."

The Shearers Ballet creative team will spend a fortnight in Cowra in spring, working with up to 20 retired members of the wool industry and with others in the communities of Cowra and Canowindra and from nearby towns of Bathurst, Orange and Forbes.

The SILOS Project is a collaboration between The Corridor Project and regional arts development organisation Arts OutWest with artistic director Patrick Nolan. SILOS draws upon a large team of contributors from both the local community and the wider Australian arts scene.

Now embedded in the local community, the first phases of the long-term SILOS Project ran 2013-2015, connecting with over 600 community members, primary and secondary students, to collect local stories and develop skills in areas like dance, music, theatre, aerial performance and multimedia.

ENDS

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Background notes:

About the SILOS Project

SILOS brings together a collection of Australia's leading artists to work with the communities in the Central West of NSW, presenting a powerful, life affirming story about our relationship with the land. The larger SILOS project draws its inspiration from the iconic architecture of regional silos and the community of people who live and work around them. The project was conceived by Phoebe Cowdery and Dylan Gower of the Corridor Project as a way to bring together professional practitioners and the local community to make work which tells local stories and has a regional relevance.

The previous phases of SILOS (from 2013) focused on a community wide program of activities: collecting local stories and developing skills in areas like aerial performance, music, theatre, dance and multimedia and pre-production work.

The project culminates in 2017 with a large scale public outdoor performance using one of the iconic grain silos in the Cowra-Canowindra area, featuring professional performers and community participants.

www.silosproject.com

About the key artists

Patrick Nolan Creative Director SILOS Project. Patrick has been working as a director for over twenty years and has created numerous new Australian works, performed in festivals, opera houses, theatres, showgrounds, city streets and car parks. He's had the privilege to work with highly skilled performers, horses, opera singers, pipers, Lord Mayors, and a hundred school children dressed as the animals on Noah's ark. As a theatre maker he is driven by a process in which a performer explores the extreme of their capacity to find a way of expressing an idea, a feeling, a sound, that takes the audience to a place of enquiry and perhaps, understanding. Productions directed include: for Legs - The Voyage, Symphony, My Bicycle Loves You, The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other, for other companies - A Flowering Tree, Electric Lenin, Love in the Age of Therapy, Pelleas et Melisande, Dido and Aeneas, La Boheme, Eugene Onegin, Cosi fan tutte, The Marriage of Figaro, an adaptation of Tales from the Arabian Nights, bash by Neil Labute, Malade Imaginaire, Twelfth Night and Macbeth. He has directed for Opera Australia, New Zealand Opera, Sydney Theatre Company, Griffin Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, Queensland Music Festival, Sydney Festival, Melbourne International Arts Festival and the Perth International Arts Festival.

Alison Plevvey graduated from WAAPA (2009) with a first class honours degree, Bachelor of Arts - Dance. She directed funded youth dance works 'No Planet B', 'Talk2Me' and 'Synthesis' in her hometown Bathurst NSW, 2007-2012. She is interested in the interface of movement with non-traditional theatre spaces and environments and the engagement of audiences via a connection to place. In 2012 Alison received an Australia Council ArtStart grant enabling the development of dance/physical theatre company *Lingua Franca* with Adam Deusien. In 2013 their debut work *Right Behind You* toured to the Wirksworth Festival, UK. Their 2015 work *unsustainable Behaviour* will be a feature performance at the national regional arts festival ARTLANDS Dubbo in October. They are working on a new piece *Mighty*. At Short + Sweet Dance Festival 2013 she was awarded Most Outstanding Choreography and Best Female. Alison is committed to dance education and works closely with QL2 Dance as a tutor

Scott Saunders is best known as a founding member of dig (directions in groove) in which he was a vocalist and played keyboards. dig were signed to the prestigious Verve label and enjoyed success in Australia and internationally throughout the '90s, recording one EP and three albums and receiving a gold record, a MO award, and two APRA awards for most performed Jazz composition. dig toured extensively, playing numerous prestigious international music festivals including: Montreaux, Vienna, The North Sea, Heineken Nottingham, and at London's Jazz Café, Hot Brass in Paris and Boogaloo in Berlin. Scott has worked as a musician, composer, producer, arranger and sound designer. Prior to dig he toured Australia playing keyboards with The Reels, Eurogliders, and Deckchairs Overboard. Post dig he was a member of Multiball who made further explorations in combining jazz improvisation, deep grooves and electronica. He has provided music composition, production and sound design for award winning TV and theatre productions, and produced commissions as composer and musical director on large-scale community theatre projects for The Queensland Music Festival. He has long and varied experience as a music educator; starting with a program at Long Bay Jail he went on to teach at the EORA Aboriginal Performing Arts TAFE and at The Australian Institute of Music.