

CHAMPIONS

Directed by Martin del Amo

Produced by FORM Dance Projects

CHAMPIONS is a new Australian dance work featuring an all-female dream team of 11 contemporary dancers in an epic, adrenaline-fuelled choreographic match.

Under the direction of Martin del Amo, one of Australia's most innovative choreographers, CHAMPIONS celebrates the talents of elite performers and harnesses the energy and enthusiasm of sports fans.

Complete with pre-show analysis, backstage interviews and running commentary, hosted by popular Australian sports presenter Mel McLaughlin.

CHAMPIONS draws surprising parallels between football and contemporary dance, and reveals unexpected insights into the fundamentals of athletic and artistic performance.

"Dancers are the cleverest with their feet, next are footballers." Johan Cruyff

Creative Team

Martin del Amo (Sidney Myer Creative Fellow 2016-2017, Anatomy of An Afternoon, Sydney Festival 2012 and Southbank London 2014) has assembled an exceptional cast including Kristina Chan (Best Female Dancer – Australian Dance Awards), Sara Black (Best Female Dancer – Helpmann Awards), Carlee Mellow, Marnie Palomares, Kathryn Puie, Rhiannon Newton, Cloé Fournier, Sophia Ndaba, Katina Olsen, Melanie Palomares and Miranda Wheen. The creative team is complemented by composer Gail Priest, dramaturg Julie-Anne Long, sports performance consultant Ahilan Ratnamohan, video artist Sam James, lighting designer Karen Norris and costume/set designer Clare Britton. Dancer, Miranda Wheen, is the artistic associate. The creation of this new large-scale dance work CHAMPIONS is a testament to the adventurous, risk-taking and open-minded approach to collaboration that characterises the independent dance sector making work in Australia today.

Rationale

Choreographic inspiration for CHAMPIONS has been derived from a highly physical set of soccer drills, tactics studies, pre-game warm up rituals, on-field victory dances and the performative experience of triumph and defeat. The powerful all-female cast challenges long-held expectations of who qualifies as dance/sports 'champions' in a culture that notoriously underpays, and generally underappreciates, the achievements of female performers both in sports and in the arts. CHAMPIONS celebrates the contributions and achievements of female athletes and dancers to Australian society.



Gail Priest and video artist Sam James. Priest's richly textured soundscape captures the sonically charged stadium experience through field recordings. James's video animations reflect the screen images prevalent during TV coverage of major sports events – statistics, analytical charts and sponsor logos. Engagement with The Western Sydney Wanderers continued with coaches, physiotherapists and athletes being invited into the studio as consultants to ensure the performance remains firmly anchored in professional sports reality.



Development

The first creative development of the work took place in Parramatta in September 2015. Its aim was to take inspiration from the highly physical football culture and mine it for choreographic intent. Regular training sessions were held by footballer/performer Ahilan Ratnamohan to fuel a strongly football-inspired movement vocabulary. FORM coordinated access for del Amo and the dancers to attend a series of training sessions of The Western Sydney Wanderers Football Club Women's League to consult with coaches, physiotherapists and athletes (aged 16 – 34). FORM also facilitated for 3 of the Matilda's from the national soccer team to come to the studio to share their experiences of being elite Australian athletes.

During the second creative development in May/June 2016 del Amo focused on generating choreographic dance/sports material through collaboration with the dancers, dramaturg Julie-Anne Long, composer

Rehearsal and Presentation

FORM will facilitate a final development/rehearsal where del Amo will work with the creative team on the finishing touches to make CHAMPIONS performance-ready. Design concepts will be finalised and integrated, aimed at conjuring a stadium-like atmosphere to give audiences a genre-defying viewing experience, unlike those commonly associated with conventional dance presentation.

CHAMPIONS will premiere at Carriageworks in Sydney Festival 2017 from 17 to 22 January.

IMAGES: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/formdanceprojects/sets/72157671746654736/>

VIDEO: <https://vimeo.com/182383936> Password: V10

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Technical Specifications and Tour Party

- Minimum performance area: 12m x 12m
- 12m x 12m of astro-turf (in place of tarket)†
- 6 x TV screens for display of video
- Tour party size of 14-16 pax

Producer – FORM Dance Projects

FORM Dance Projects is a dynamic independent hub for Australian contemporary dance based in Parramatta, Western Sydney. FORM fulfills a diverse role within the sector, including presentation, producing, education, community engagement and audience development. Under its current director Annette McLernon, FORM's program has broadened to producing genre-defying large-scale productions with the aim to develop audiences for contemporary dance. The first production being PUNCTURE, a multi-disciplinary creation straddling contemporary dance, physical theatre and choral music in its exploration of the evolution of social dancing. Initiated by FORM and co-produced with Legs On The Wall and VOX, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, PUNCTURE premiered in Sydney Festival 2015, playing to sold-out houses and receiving critical acclaim. Buoyed by this success, FORM commissioned Martin del Amo to choreograph and direct CHAMPIONS. FORM has grown into one of Australia's leading dance presenters, carving its own niche by initiating, commissioning and investing in independent dance artists in order to produce and present innovative and accessible contemporary works of scale. FORM seeks to develop audiences nationally and internationally for Australian contemporary dance, leading the organisation to propose a series of complementary initiatives (digital, education and touring) to enhance reach and global connections as part of its 2016-2020 strategic plan.

Director/Choreographer – Martin del Amo

Martin was born in Bonn, Germany. His teachers include German modern dancer and Mary Wigman-student Katharine Sehnert, Japanese Butoh performer Anzu Furukawa and Body Weather practitioners Tess de Quincey and Stuart Lynch. Between 1993 and 2002, Martin was based in Berlin, where he was an active member of the city's lively independent dance scene. During that period, he collaborated with a wide range of artists of various genres and styles and began to develop solo works integrating movement with spoken text. From 1995, Martin was a core member of the de Quincey / Lynch Performance Union, with whom he performed in Germany, Denmark and Sweden. He first came to Australia to continue his training with de Quincey / Lynch in 1996. In 2002, he relocated to Sydney permanently. In 2014, Martin received an Australia Council grant to attend the Internationale Tanzmesse in Düsseldorf, Germany – an international marketplace and festival platform dedicated to showcasing and promoting contemporary dance. The Australian delegation was selected by Sophie Travers (International Development Manager – Europe at Australia Council for the Arts) and included Philip Adams (Balletlab), Lucy Guerin (Lucy Guerin Inc) Shelly Lassica (independent), Annette Vieusseux (Lucy Guerin Inc), Catherine Jones (Chunky Move), Freya Waterson (Insite Arts), Fenn Gordon (Performing Lines), Ann Dunn (Sydney Dance Company), Lisa Ffrench (Carriageworks) and Jeremy Remkes (Arts Centre Melbourne). To be part of this delegation was an invaluable experience for del Amo and provided him with the opportunity to network with international presenters, expanding on the contacts he made during the successful presentation of his work 'Anatomy of an Afternoon' at Southbank Centre London in July that year.

Puncture Media Review Quotes

Jo Litson, joliton.com, 25th Jan 2015:

- Given a brief season as part of the 2015 Sydney Festival, Puncture is such a lovely show that is begs to be brought back and seen more widely.
- All of them perform with enormous energy and an exciting, high-octane physicality, the sweat literally dripping from them, while managing to project individual personalities at the same time.

Lynne Lancaster, Arts Hub, 26th Jan 2015:

- One of, if not the best, show of this year's Sydney Festival, Puncture hurtled onto the stage at Parramatta and left us breathless.

Mountains Never Meet Media Review Quotes

Jill Sykes, Sydney Morning Herald, 19th Aug 2011:

- It is exciting and bold, showing how much of a team the performers have become under del Amo's direction.

Anatomy of an Afternoon Media Review Quotes

Luke Jennings, The Guardian, 13th Jul 2014:

- FIVE STARS. A solo work by choreographer Martin del Amo for the Australian dancer Paul White, set to a whispery, mysterious score by Mark Bradshaw, it reveals the afternoon as a time of disorientation and abstract fears. The result is as much sculptural as choreographic.

Gerard Davis, Dance Europe, 2014:

- Taking Nijinsky's L'après-midi d'un faune as a starting point, [Paul] White and choreographer Martin del Amo have created a sharply observed, boldly structured and absolutely compelling piece of theatre. There are nods to Nijinsky but this work is very much its own beast.