

Curriculum vitae: Michelle Potter

Michelle Potter was born in Sydney and learnt to dance with Joan and Monica Halliday, Ronne Arnold and Valrene Tweedie. She also studied acting and theatre techniques at the Mina Shelley School of the Theatre. She began her professional career in 1959 performing in *Aladdin*, a Christmas pantomime directed by Maurice Sullivan and Mina Shelley, and continued to work in the Sullivan-Shelley shows for the next few years. In the mid-1960s she worked with Valrene Tweedie's choreographic ensemble, Ballet Australia, performing in both full-scale productions and in choreographic workshop performances.

In the 1970s and 1980s, after completing a degree in social anthropology and a diploma in education from Sydney University, she taught for Janet Karin and Bryan Lawrence at the National Capital Ballet School in Canberra. During this period she also choreographed *Court Serenade* for National Capital Dancers (1975), *Orpheus and Eurydice* for Canberra Opera (1977), and *Morning Prayer* for St James Church, Curtin ACT (1978), and appeared in productions by the National Capital Dancers, including *Nutcracker* and *Giselle*. In the 1980s she also returned to academic study and completed a second undergraduate degree in art history and subsequently a doctorate in art history and dance history at the Australian National University. She was the National Library of Australia's Esso Fellow in the Performing Arts between 1988 and 1990 and Australian National University's Janet Wilkie Memorial Scholar for 1989, which gave her study time in New York.

In 1996 she curated the National Library of Australia's exhibition *Dance people dance*, which toured Australia under a Visions of Australia grant until 1999. Between 1997 and 2001 Potter was manager of the Keep Dancing! project at the National Film and Sound Archive. As part of that project she co-scripted, researched and produced two videos, *An avalanche of dancing: the Ballets Russes in Australia 1936-1940* (1999) and the award-winning *Boro's ballet: the making of an Australian ballet 1939-1961* (2001) and the DVD *The Australian Ballet: opening act 1962-1972* (2002).

In 2002, Potter was appointed inaugural curator of dance at the National Library of Australia. During this period she oversaw the establishment and content development of the Library's dance website, Australia Dancing, and was one of the original team of investigators for the research project 'Ballets Russes in Australia: Our Cultural Revolution', a four-year collaborative partnership between the Australian Ballet, the University of Adelaide and the National Library of Australia. In 2005 she was accorded the title of Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Adelaide for the period of this project.

In 2006, Potter left the National Library to take up the appointment of curator of the Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, a position she held until 2008. During this appointment, she co-curated *INVENTION: Merce*

Cunningham and collaborators, a major retrospective exhibition for the New York Public Library, in June 2007. Since returning to Australia in 2008 she has been working as a freelance writer, curator and historian

Potter has been writing about dance since 1990. Her articles and reviews have been published in a range of journals, magazines, programs and newspapers in Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany. Outlets for her writing have included *The Age*, *The Australian*, *Australian Art Review*, *Australian Book Review*, *Ballet News*, *Brolga*, *The Bulletin*, *The Canberra Times*, *Choreography and Dance*, *Current News from the Library for the Performing Arts* (e- newsletter), *Dance Australia*, *Dance Chronicle*, *Dance Forum*, *Dance Research*, *Dancing Times*, *Jahresmitteilungen von Tanzplan Deutschland*, *Journal of the Australian Society of Archivists*, *The Library Magazine*, *Muse*, *Museum National*, *National Library of Australia News*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *Voices* and. Her writing has also been published as chapters in books and she is the author of five books—*A Full House* (1991), *A Passion for Dance* (1997), *A Collector's Book of Australian Dance* (2002) *Meryl Tankard: an original voice* (2012), and *Dame Maggie Scott: A Life in Dance* (2014). In 1994 she founded *Brolga: an Australian journal about dance* and continued to edit that journal until mid-2006.

She has presented many papers with a focus on dance at conferences and forums in Australia, Germany and the United States and has appeared as a guest presenter at the National Gallery of Australia, the National Gallery of Victoria, Arts Centre Melbourne, and Fairhall House, Melbourne. She is presenter of 'On dancing', a monthly radio segment on dance in Canberra and elsewhere on ArtSound FM.

Potter is the recipient of two Australian Dance Awards: Outstanding Achievement in Dance on Film (2001), which she shared with Sally Jackson with whom she collaborated on the video documentary *Boro's Ballet*; and Services to Dance (2003). Other awards include an International Dance Day award in 1996 and a Canberra Critics' Circle Award in 1997. She was also the recipient of a Scholars and Artists in Residence Fellowship at the National Film and Sound Archive in 2012.

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