





PHOTO: DARREN THOMAS

La Scala's season at QPAC was a massive hit with those critics lucky enough to get to Brisbane. Pictured are Nicoletta Manni as Kitri and Leonid Sarafanov as Basilio in La Scala's 'Don Quixote'.



Michelle Potter (Canberra)

The Canberra Times;
michellepotter.org

Highlight of the year

The La Scala production of *Don Quixote* seen in Brisbane in October as part of the Queensland Performing Arts Centre's International Series. After many viewings of Nureyev's production for The Australian Ballet, it was amazing to see another company taking on the same ballet by the same choreographer and bringing a new understanding to the storyline and giving a totally different interpretation to some of the characters.

Most significant dance event

The formation in Canberra of a new entrepreneurial company, Bravissimo Productions, whose purpose is to bring a range of international artists to the national capital. With its first production, a gala event held in October, the organisation showcased performances by Russian, Cuban and American dancers.

Most interesting Australian independent group or artist

Liz Lea, who continually finds new ways to stage dance and who works with such a range of artists from across performing genres. *RED*, Lea's 2018 solo show, followed her courageous journey to deal with endometriosis, and highlighted the work of four independent choreographers.

Most interesting Australian group or artist

Queensland Ballet, which never ceases to surprise with its innovative shows and outstanding dancers.

Most outstanding choreography

Garry Stewart's *The Beginning of Nature* for Australian Dance Theatre. The choreography was compelling and engrossing and the work as a whole was poetic and intensely theatrical.

Best new work

Aurum, choreographed by Alice Topp and presented by the Australian Ballet in its "Verve" season. *Aurum* was an emotionally powerful work which so strongly engaged the senses.

Most outstanding dancer

Anca Frankenhaeuser of the independent group, Australian Dance Artists. Her performance with violinist Kailin Yong in *MIST*, choreographed by Stephanie Burrige and performed as part of Canberra Dance Theatre's 40th anniversary program in October, was a seamless, collaborative duet. Frankenhaeuser danced and acted from deep within her body and heart.



Matte Roffe, Kimball Wong, Zoe Dunwoodie, Harrison Elliott and Christopher Mills in ADT's 'The Beginning of Nature', recognised by multiple critics this year.

Karul, now based in Brisbane with support from BlakDance.

Most interesting Australian group or artist

Restless Dance Theatre, under the direction of Michelle Ryan, produces works that are informed, but not defined by disability. *Intimate Spaces* (Festival 2018) was a beautifully crafted piece of theatre – tender, witty, challenging, and whimsical.

Most outstanding choreography

Firebird – Liam Scarlett, Queensland Ballet. A skilfully crafted modern take on the tale that electrifies, drawing dramatic colour and texture from the scintillating Stravinsky score with movement that positively sings.

Best new work

Everyday Requiem – Natalie Weir and Expressions Dance Company (EDC) – emotion expressed through movement, honed to a razor-sharp precision.

Most outstanding dancer

Samantha Hines (*Dust* – Dancenorth) – a mesmerising performance.
 Maria Celeste Losa (*Don Quixote* and *Giselle*, La Scala) – a statuesque, commanding dancer, and sublime as the Queen of the Dryads and Queen of the Wilis.
 Laura Hidalgo – (*Firebird*, Queensland Ballet) – formidable, captivating, expressive.

Dancer to watch

Isabella Swietlicki – exquisite in Rani Luther's *Lunar* in "Synergy", Queensland Ballet. A Jette Parker Young Artist, promoted to Company Artist from 2019.

Boos!

The dearth of significant dance programming in successive Brisbane Festivals is excruciating. I moan every time I see the wonderful variety the Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide Festivals repeatedly offer.

Encore please!

Congratulations to Louise Deleur for almost single-handedly getting the Brisbane International Contemporary Dance Prix up so successfully this year. The hope is this will become a regular event in Brisbane, supporting young contemporary dancers forge pathways into the profession.

Dancer to watch

Joseph Romancewicz, who joined The Australian Ballet in 2018. His performances in small parts in *The Merry Widow* and *Spartacus* have demanded attention and clearly shown his ability to interact with others on stage and to draw the audience into the work.

Boos!

The National Gallery of Australia's lack of recognition of the dancers and the violinist who gave public performances as part of the Merce Cunningham Residency in September during the Gallery's American Masters exhibition. Every work of art hanging on the walls was attributed properly, but neither musician nor dancers were named. Not a hand-out to be seen, and not even a spoken recognition.

Encore please!

Queensland Performing Arts Centre's International Series, which has brought an amazing array of internationally renowned companies to Brisbane over the past several years. May the series continue!



**Denise Richardson
(Brisbane)**

Dance Australia

Highlight of the year

Teatro alla Scala. Its Brisbane season confirmed the ballet company as vibrant, energetic and accomplished.

Most significant dance event

Inaugural Brisbane International Contemporary Dance Prix – a wonderful week of opportunity for contemporary dancers, to equal that offered to ballet dancers in the Prix du Lausanne.

Most interesting Australian independent group or artist

Thomas E.S. Kelly – created the tightly structured, entertaining, and thought provoking piece (*Mis*)*Conceive* for Supercell Festival of Contemporary Dance 2018, and leads the newly formed independent performing arts company