

## INTERNATIONAL DANCE DAY MESSAGE 2004

The 2004 International Dance Day Message has been delivered by Stephen Page of Australia and has been circulated world-wide:

‘Dance is the original most ancient form of human expression. Through the body and physical language, dance has a powerful connection with the emotional and spiritual worlds.

‘In traditional Aboriginal culture, dance is the core, like a kind of sacred medicine. Dance is grounded, connected to the spirit of Mother Earth. Unless you surrender to the dance you can't hunt quietly. It is an integral part of human existence.

‘When I create a new dance work I ask the dancers to swallow and digest the traditional seed, to sense the innate code within so that we can transform the traditional essence to the contemporary world.

‘Dance is the universal language. It represents human identity and a celebration of the human spirit. Dance is the artistic heart of kinship. It is a sacred universal remedy.’

Stephen Page, artistic director and choreographer, was born in 1965 in Brisbane. He is descended from the Nunukul people of Stradbroke Island and the Munaldjali clan of the Yugambeh nation of South-East Queensland. He danced with the Sydney Dance Company until 1991 at which time he was appointed artistic director of Bangarra Dance Theatre. With his works he has created milestones for the company and Australian dance. In 1996, Mr Page made his creative debut with The Australian Ballet, choreographing the short work *Alchemy*. The following year he brought The Australian Ballet and Bangarra Dance Theatre together in *Rites*, to Stravinsky's *Rite of spring*. *Rites* premiered at the 1997 Melbourne Festival. He choreographed the *Awakening* segment of the 2000 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony and is artistic director of the 2004 Adelaide Festival.

In 1982 the International Dance Committee of the International Theatre Institute (ITI–UNESCO) founded International Dance Day to be celebrated every year on 29 April. The date commemorates the birthday of Jean-Georges Noverre, who was born in 1727 and was a great reformer of dance. In 1995, in an effort to unite dance, the International Dance Committee entered into a collaborative effort for the celebration of International Dance Day with World Dance Alliance. International Dance Day is celebrated in Australia through Australian Dance Week, with many preliminary activities taking place on 29 April to coincide with international celebrations.

Every year a message from a well-known dance personality is circulated throughout the world. The intention of International Dance Day and the message is to bring all dance together on this day, to celebrate the art form and revel in its universality, to cross all political, cultural and ethnic barriers and bring people together in peace and friendship with a common language – dance.