

fLiNG Physical Theatre
 As the program comes to the
is a contemporary
 end of its first triennial funding
dance | physical theatre
 period, Artistic Director and
program focused
 choreographer, Lee Pemberton,
on youth performance
 looks back over what has been
and training,
 achieved for NSW's first funded
based in Bega.
 regional youth dance company.

by LEE PEMBERTON



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SINCE IT BEGAN IN 2003, FLING HAS PRODUCED FOUR ORIGINAL, full length performances, employed on average 30 artists a year, toured regionally and to Sydney, performed on the Opera House stage, engaged over 1,235 young people in physical theatre or dance activities and performed to more than 10,000 people. Based in the Bega Valley, which has a population of 33,000 people, fLiNG is 450 kms from Sydney, has no purpose built theatre and only a couple of small traditional dance schools teaching mostly classical ballet and jazz.

fLiNG is my dream child and building the company has been a seven year long labour of love for me since I moved to the region from Melbourne. During the first project I ran in the area, I had to beg the ten young girls to get involved, just hoping they would stay and see the project through. Now fLiNG has a membership of over forty-five committed young people between the ages of 10 and 22, with people banging on the door to join.

fLiNG Physical Theatre has received 50% of its core funding from the Federal Government through the Regional Arts Fund and from the State Government through the Arts NSW Dance Program. The rest is made up from membership, box office, community class fees, small grants and local sponsorship, giving the young company a healthy balance of stakeholders.

Currently fLiNG trains at the Bega Town Hall and has gradually built a small cache of equipment and personnel over the three years. The support of Regional Arts Board, South East Arts Region

January – February

26 January

 The **GOSFORD** Peninsula Australia Day includes bush bands, spectacular fireworks, food and market stalls, dancing in the streets, children's games and an art competition. Web www.gosford.nsw.gov.au

27 January

 The 35th CMAA Country Music Awards. The country music industry's night of nights in **TAMWORTH**, recognising excellence in song of the year, top selling album, and solo and group vocalist awards. Web www.country.com.au

(SEAR), has been instrumental, with General Manager, RADO Jennifer Hunt, providing support for Fling's company management. Jen's arrival in Bega in 2001 was timely, particularly after her six year involvement with The Flying Fruit Fly Circus in Albury.

fLiNG shows have been presented in the 100 year old show ground pavilion, the Bega Town Hall, the indoor basketball stadium and at various skate parks around the region, demanding that lateral thought be put into presentation and production. fLiNG has a secret weapon in their production team in the name of Robb Jamieson who is one of those blokes who has a background in just about everything from major construction sites and oil rigs to set construction and circus big tops. He can create a 13 metre proscenium arch with legs inside a basketball stadium that looks fantastic – and all on a shoestring.

A labour



The company makes dance with a difference by fusing acrobatic theatre with a blend of visually strong imagery and a mix of many dance styles to create shows that have great audience appeal with a message.

fLiNG Physical Theatre has managed to create a balance between the physically daring and conceptually modern by developing a

1 – 4 February

 The **BUNGENDORE** Country Muster incorporates the now famous Australian Bush Ballad Awards. Bush poets, buskers and continuous live entertainment all weekend.

1 February – 4 March

 **Capricornia:** The first major exhibition to of the large-scale work of contemporary photographic artist Shane Fitzgerald. **TWEED RIVER** Regional Art Gallery. Tel 02 6670 2790

training regime in gymnastics and contemporary dance. Boys get their fix of daring and the 'wow' factor in a controlled and safe environment and the girls love showing strength and purpose.

Through a visiting artists program, fLiNG is able to attract top performers to the area for added input during creative developments of the shows. In 2006 this program also included an exchange between Critical Path, Sydney's choreographic Centre and fLiNG, in a newly developed rural retreat for choreographers. This exchange is expected to continue in 2007 and will breed a new network for fLiNG while offering Sydney artists time out to work or play in this beautiful coastal setting.

Who Will Come To The Rescue?, fLiNG's latest show is "an often very funny look at the effect of the unknown threat on our safe

physical theatre, filmed harness work with projected animation and has captured the imagination and enthusiasm of six senior lead males and ten junior boys.

The recent production has also had the benefit of a good lighting guy, new to the area. Gerry Corcoran has a wealth of experience gained in England and Scotland and his enthusiasm and skills are an asset. Other recent attractions to the company are mothers with professional training in sewing and pattern-making who have made a fantastic wardrobe of costumes from the designs of Sydney costume designer, Kiri Morcombe. Strong graphic design has also been a part of this company's history, with Nic Vandersteegan who, for *Who Will Come To The Rescue?* has designed a sensational set of nine super hero swap cards and poster to promote the show. The super hero cards were distributed in the area in the weeks leading up to the show's opening and were a great success.

With a brilliant musical score by Candy McVeity, *Who Will Come To The Rescue?* is the most fully developed show fLiNG has produced. When I approached McVeity to do the score, she said she "didn't know if she could do it," but in the end produced a classic sound score. McVeity plays most of the instruments in her composition, which scans the musical field from jazz, classical and pop culture to eerie sound scapes befitting a comic book style. She and her husband, John, have mastered the show's CD in their Bega studio at JMC Productions, another Bega Valley gem.

With a cast of 43 young people, a volunteer list as long as your arm and a show that goes beyond my dream, the company has grown up and *Who Will Come To The Rescue?* is fLiNG Physical Theatre's most ambitious show yet. ■

CONTACT Lee Pemberton Tel 02 6494 4376
Find out more about fLiNG on the SEAR website at www.sear.org.au/fling1.0.html.

Audiences in Sydney and Wollongong will have a chance to see *Who Will Come To The Rescue?* with a smaller cast comprised of the cream of the crop, when it tours to the Riverside Theatre in Parramatta and the Illawarra Performing Arts Centre in 2007.



An Australian Government Initiative



The Regional Arts Fund is an Australian Government initiative supporting the arts in regional, remote and isolated Australia.

of love



Performance of *Who Will Come To The Rescue?*
Photos: Paul Hopper

lives." Based on the theme of a nineteen-fifties comic book, it has a climax with every performer on stage dressed as a super hero wearing bright lycra leotards.

Although this doesn't sound like something that would go down as a treat, especially for rural boys, *Who Will Come To The Rescue?* has acrobatic tricks, contemporary dance, a tango,

February

1 February — 4 March

👁️ *Lamentation for Lost Landscapes*
Gordon Rintoul's 40-panel panoramic series of the turbulent historical landscape surrounding the mining town of Queenstown, Tasmania. **TWEED RIVER** Regional Art Gallery Tel 02 6670 2790

2 February — 18 March

👁️ Works by Klaus Moje, known for his development and exploration of the combination of glass blowing and kiln fusing techniques **BATHURST** Regional Art Gallery Tel 02 6331 6066

3 February

👁️ *Dig It: It's Hot!* A 50s rock 'n' roll dance workshop by the Swing Beat Dance Studio from Newcastle, with evening dance-off featuring The Shuffle Boys. **WINGHAM** Services Club Tel 02 6552 5339

6 — 10 February

👁️ *Keating!* is Company B's country, rock, soul opera of political skulduggery; mixing satirical lyrics, historical revisionism and rap, reggae and rumba. **ILLAWARRA** Performing Arts Centre. Web www.ipac.org.au