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DANCE

## THIS WEEK

# Love and Loss, Australian Style

SYDNEY, Australia  
**G**RAEME MURPHY'S "Eclipse," a plotless ballet that his Sydney Dance Company brings to the Joyce Theater in Manhattan for a six-day run beginning on Tuesday, exemplifies the "abstract" phase in his creative cycle.

"I careen from narrative to non-narrative," Mr. Murphy, 53, the most prominent contemporary ballet choreographer in Australia, said in his suburban apartment. He recently created an award-winning vaudeville fantasia called "Tivoli" and a new production of "Swan Lake," both for the Australian Ballet in Melbourne. But he feels abstract works, freed of story and characters, are the best way to give the 17 classically trained dancers in his troupe, as he put it, "their moment in the sun."

Mr. Murphy says he also likes to collaborate with young artists from other disciplines. "One of the great joys of this job is the artists you discover and help a new audience to discover," he said.

He discovered the composer Matthew Hindson, 35, whose music forms the lush score for "Eclipse," while listening to the radio. After hearing one of Mr. Hindson's pieces, Mr. Murphy called the station to find out how to contact the composer. He then asked Carl Vine, another composer he had collaborated with, to work with Mr. Hindson, and the two pieced together seven Hindson compositions to create the score, the sound of which ranges from the lyrically symphonic to "mad



Branco Gaica

*Xue Jun Wang, standing, and Sally Wicks in Graeme Murphy's "Eclipse."*

techno," Mr. Murphy said. Like all of his work, Mr. Murphy says the roughly 80-minute "Eclipse" is evocative of love and loss. In twos and threes, the dancers in translucent animal-print costumes by the fashion designer Akira Isegawa swirl together and pass under a tubular steel sculpture in the form of an arch that hangs above the stage. In larger ensembles, the dancers form ranks and support one another through what appear to be pangs of withdrawal.

Last spring Mr. Murphy and Janet Vernon, his wife and the troupe's associate artistic director, took a six-and-a-half-month sabbatical — his first in 12 years, her first.

They visited Russia and Scandinavia and spent time on their 800-acre spread in his native Tasmania, a property, he says, "on which you could literally get lost."

They left their company in the hands of Brett Morgan, its rehearsal director, and brought in Stephen Petronio from New York, who choreographed a work called "Underland," to songs by Nick Cave. While Mr. Murphy was away, his dancers created an evening of their own compositions.

"I thought I was essential, but I'm clearly not," he said, adding, half joking, "I'm going back to Tasmania, to the farm."

ELIZABETH ZIMMER