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NEWS FROM BELOW

**SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY RETURNS TO U.S. MARCH 2–31
PREMIERES BY GRAEME MURPHY AND STEPHEN PETRONIO
*Tour Marks Final U.S. Performances Under Artistic Director
Graeme Murphy and Artistic Associate Janet Vernon***

Sydney Dance Company is readying itself for a month-long, coast-to-coast American tour, March 2–31, in what marks its last U.S. appearances under the direction of Graeme Murphy, who recently resigned after 30 years as the Company’s artistic head. The nine-city tour features American premieres of works by Murphy and contemporary American choreographer Stephen Petronio.

One of America’s favorite dance imports, Sydney Dance Company marks its ninth tour across the U.S. Murphy’s tour contribution, “GRAND,” a spectacular and poetic full-evening work, which won the 2005 Australian Dance Award for Best Choreography, is scheduled for McCallum Theatre in Palm Desert, CA (March 6); Yardley Hall, Overland Park, KS (March 10); Meany Hall, Seattle, WA (March 15–17); Eisenhower Auditorium, University Park, PA (March 22); Byham Theater, Pittsburgh, PA (March 24); Rose Lehrman Arts Center, Harrisburg, PA (March 27); Zellerbach Theatre/Annenberg Center for the Arts, Philadelphia, PA (March 29–31).

After the human body, the piano is Murphy’s favorite instrument. Having spent 30 years creating dances inspired by mythology, literature, surrealism and romance, Murphy has now turned to his ongoing romance with the piano. Bach, Gershwin, Ligeti and Ravel, Henry Cowell, Rachmaninoff, Fats Waller and Debussy are his muses of choice. Structured as an exhilarating series of vignettes, each responding to the era, style and mood of its musical accompaniment, the dance is dedicated to the memory of Murphy’s mother, Betty, a piano teacher, whom he has described as “a grand dame” and “adored above all.” It was she who “set my baby feet dancing.” Australian fashion designer Akira Isogawa designed costumes to echo the musical theme and the lyrical flow of the dancers’ moving bodies. Gerard Manion’s set incorporates

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both the glistening shell of a suspended grand piano and the onstage piano. Critically hailed as one of Murphy's greatest ballets, the dance is "grand" in all senses. And the music, of course, will be played live. The pianist is Scott Davie.

Stephen Petronio's "Underland" was also choreographed in response to its music, but music radically different from that accompanying Murphy's ballet. Petronio chose a non-linear, non-narrative exploration of the dark, emotional work of Australian-born, contemporary composer Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds. The music was re-mixed especially for "Underland" by Paul Healy and Cave's long-time producer Tony Cohen. Typical of Petronio's take-no prisoners propulsive speed, the dance's edgy beauty is reinforced by an ever-changing visual landscape created by Australian video artist Mike Daly and American lighting designer Ken Tabachnick. The costumes were created by American fashion designer Tara Subkoff/Imitation of Christ.

Commissioned by Sydney Dance Company, "Underland" premiered in 2003 at the Sydney Opera House. In the United States, it will be seen at the Jackson Hall/Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts in Davis, CA (March 2 & 3) and at Keller Auditorium/White Bird in Portland, OR (March 13).

In addition to creating "Underland" for Sydney Dance Company and countless works for his own popular modern dance troupe, Petronio has created commissioned dances for Ballet Frankfurt, Deutsche Opera Berlin, Maggio Danza Florence, London's Ricochet Dance Company, the Hebbel Theater in Berlin and Lyon Opera Ballet, among others.

About Sydney Dance Company: Sydney Dance Company has been headed by Artistic Director Graeme Murphy, along with Artistic Associate Janet Vernon, since 1979. Both resigned from the 18-member Company this past July. One of the most original and innovative international dance troupes, the Company, which was founded in 1969, has presented over 140 new works, half of which were created by Murphy. In addition to more than 25 international tours to Asia, Europe and North and South America, the Company has performed home seasons at the Sydney Opera House since 1977.

About Graeme Murphy: Murphy began his dance career as a performer with The Australian Ballet, for whom he also created his first ballet "Ecco Le Diavole" in 1971. He went on to dance with the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet and the Ballets Felix Blaska in France. In addition to the dances he creates for Sydney Dance Company, Murphy has choreographed several works for The Australian Ballet, including an original, complete "Nutcracker" in 1992 and a hugely successful, new "Swan Lake," which won the 2003 Australian Dance Award and the

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2005 London Critics Circle Award for Best Production by an International Ballet Company. He has also created ballets for Nederlands Dans Theater, the Royal New Zealand Ballet, Shanghai Song and Dance Ensemble and the Bayerisches Staatsballett München and was commissioned to create a solo for Mikhail Baryshnikov for White Oak Dance Project's 1996 Australian tour. Other works include 2000's "Mythologia" for the Sydney Olympics International Arts Festival and "Tivoli," a 2001 dance musical, which was awarded four Australian Dance Awards. Murphy has also worked with former world champion ice skating duo Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean to choreograph their world tour production and TV program "Fire and Ice."

A successful director and choreographer for opera, Murphy directed Brian Howard's "Metamorphosis," Giacomo Puccini's "Turandot" and Richard Strauss's "Salome," and choreographed the Canadian Opera Company's "Death in Venice." In 1994, he created a new production of Hector Berlioz's "Les Troyens," bringing the singers and dancers of Opera Australia together with Sydney Dance Company, and in 1999, he choreographed The Metropolitan Opera's "Samson and Dalila" which later aired nationally on PBS Great Performances.

Murphy is the recipient of his country's most important honors including an AM (Member in the Order of Australia) in 1982. He was honored at the Inaugural Sydney Opera House Honors in 1993, named a National Living Treasure in 1999 and is the recipient of three honorary doctorates. He also received the 2001 Helpmann Award for Best Choreography, the 2002 James Cassius Award for his career achievements and the 2003 Centenary Medal from the Australian government for contribution to the development of dance in Australia. Murphy was awarded the Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Award in 2004 in recognition of being named "Cultural Leader of the Year" by the Australian Business and Arts Foundation.

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