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## FLEX AND POINT

Not just moves – there's *more to contemporary dance* than meets the eye, says choreographer Melanie Lane

The only female on the bill for this year's *New Breed*, a Sydney Dance Company-led showcase highlighting five choreography stars on the rise, Melanie Lane is obsessed with the body. From how it moves and how it can be manipulated to the various industries surrounding it, her work dives deep into it all. Based between Melbourne and Berlin, Lane's résumé name-drops some of the leading companies

between here and Europe and her work has graced the stages of music festivals and inside New York's MoMA PS1. Here, she shows how deep her body obsession runs...

**[DANCE] IS A TOUGH INDUSTRY TO BE IN AND YOU HAVE TO FIGHT HARD, ESPECIALLY IF YOU WANT TO BE INDEPENDENT.** There's a lot more behind creating a dance work than people might imagine. It's not just about working in the studio, but researching and trying to find out as much information as possible that will inform the making of the work. Then, of course, there are dancers, sound makers, costume makers and light designers. It's a collaborative process, not just about making up moves.

**I CAN GET OBSESSED WITH THE SUBJECT I'M WORKING ON.** I just premiered a piece looking at the nightclub environment – so I did a lot of research with local performers from exotic clubs, burlesque and drag (including male strippers) and we had them give us workshops. I've also created a piece with two female body builders where I looked at the body's representation and the intensive training of body builders. I did their diet, training and everything – I just wanted to know what it felt

like. I love immersing myself in people's worlds so that I can understand them. For me, the best way is to get my hands dirty.

**THE LACK OF FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN LARGE DANCE COMPANIES NEEDS TO BE TALKED ABOUT.** There are loads of amazing women working as choreographers in Australia – they're just taking a while to be recognised. It's quite complex and is probably a combination of many things, like tradition. It's changing, especially in Europe, but it's very overdue.

**THE BEAUTY OF CONTEMPORARY DANCE IS THAT THE POSSIBILITIES ARE INFINITE.** More and more we're seeing a crossover between contemporary dance, visual arts and the spaces that it's being performed in. You see so much dance in galleries now and I imagine that will expand into other realms as well. I know there are people already starting to work with virtual reality, so who knows, maybe it will start moving into that 3D universe. It's so open-ended. □

*New Breed 2017, a collaboration between Sydney Dance Company, Carriageworks and The Balnaves Foundation, is on from November 30 to December 9; sydneydancecompany.com*



MELANIE LANE