

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### dancenorth australia presents *Underneath*

Internationally renowned dancers from *lawn* (Australia) and *Shoku* (Japan) will perform the Australian premiere of their new dance theatre work **Underneath** at School of Arts Theatre on Wednesday 13, Thursday 14 and Friday 15 September 2006.

Devised for the Australia-Japan Dance Exchange 2006, **Underneath** combines contemporary Australian and Japanese dance in a “beautiful and engrossing cross-cultural experience”, says Artistic Director of dancenorth australia Gavin Webber, who also performs in and choreographed the show.

“Audiences will be mesmerised by the surreal nature of **Underneath**, which, through dance, delves into the subconscious of urban dwellers to explore what lies behind the skin of the everyday world,” Gavin said.

“The performance appeals to a wide audience base but especially appeals to young people because it is very funky and fresh, with lots of duo work, striking costumes and music,” he said.

Internationally famed Japanese model Sayoko Yamaguchi has designed the costumes, which range from white business shirts to bright yellow raincoats, representing themes of conformity and redemption.

Acclaimed Japanese musician Jiro Matsumoto has created a varied score, featuring guitar loop rhythms, the kazoo and singing, all of which Jiro will perform live.

Performer and choreographer Gavin Webber says the Australia-Japan partnership was a risk, but one that paid off.

“This partnership was a risky endeavour - putting people together from two completely different countries to create something that will appeal to audiences from both,” Gavin said.

“Because we collaborated on every section, the whole piece is a very unique and effective blend of two cultures,” he said. “It was also fantastic to work with leading Japanese dancers, who give the work a raw, wild edge with their cathartic, improvised style,” he said.

**Underneath** was created by Splintergroup’s three male dancers who worked with the Powerhouse in 2004/2005 to produce two sell-out seasons of *lawn*, which was selected to open the prestigious biennial dance market Tanzplattform earlier this year.

Splintergroup collaborated with Japanese dance company Batik to create **Underneath**.

Batik comprises three female dancers who performed *Shoku* to critical acclaim at the Powerhouse in 2005.

**Underneath** premiered at Red Brick Warehouse No. 1 in Yokohama for the Australia-Japan Dance Exchange 2006.

**Underneath** plays at the School of Arts Theatre in Townsville 13 to 15 September then at the Brisbane Powerhouse 19 to 20 September.

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## **UNDERNEATH - BACKGROUND**

The collaboration between dancenorth australia and Splintergroup (Townsville, Australia) and Batik (Tokyo, Japan) began in July 2005 when the two groups came together for an exploratory, one-week workshop at the Powerhouse, Brisbane. The purpose of the workshop was to see whether there was enough common ground for the companies to produce a work to for the Australia-Japan Dance Exchange 2006 as part of the Year of Exchange between Australia and Japan. The answer was a resounding yes!

The work was developed in two separate periods in Townsville & Brisbane November/ December 2005 and Yokohama January/ February 2006. It premiered at Red Brick Warehouse No. 1 in Yokohama on 10 February 2006.

Choreography: dancenorth/ Splintergroup & Batik

Choreographer/dancers: Batik- Ikuyo Kuroda, Ioe Shina, Mamiko Oe

Dance North/Splinter Group- Gavin Webber, Vincent Crowley, Grayson Millwood

Costume Design: Sayoki Yamaguchi

Music: Jiro Matsumoto

Underneath has been supported by:

Japan Foundation, Bunka-cho, Australia-Council for the Arts Community Partnerships and Market Development Division and its Dance Board

Venue and Development Partners: Powerhouse Brisbane, Dance North Bank Art 1929 Yokohama, Red Brick Warehouse No.1 Yokohama

AJDX 2006 is co-produced by Japan Contemporary Dance Network and Hirano Productions (Melbourne).

### **Kyle Page**

Kyle joined the company in 2005 for a secondment placement and featured as a dancer in all the company's productions last year. Born in Lismore, he grew up in Dubbo and moved to Brisbane when he was 12. His dance training began when he was nine at the Dubbo Ballet School. He studied dance full-time (on full scholarship) at the Australian Dance Performance Institute where he gained an Advanced Diploma of Arts (Dance/Dance Performance) while completing his year 12 studies, achieving a ranking of 98 (OP2) with Barbara Everson and Harold Collins. Kyle has performed at the Sydney Opera house in the Mc Donald's classical ballet scholarship finals two years in a row. Kyle re-joined the company as a full-time dancer this year.

### **Ryan Lowe**

Ryan was born in Sydney and studied dance at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne. In 1998 he joined Meryl Tankard's Australian Dance Theatre, performing extensively throughout Australia, Europe, Japan, the Middle East and the USA. In 1999 and 2000 Ryan worked with Gary Stewart's Thwack performing Plastic Space and Housedance an aerial work performed on the mainsail of the Sydney Opera House. Since 2000 Ryan has been a freelance artist based in Melbourne with an ongoing involvement with Phillip Adams' Balletlab, creating and performing Upholster, Nativity, Fiction and the international touring of Amplification to South Korea, Romania, Bulgaria.

Ryan has also performed with Chunky Move, reproducing Prue Lang's Infinite Temporal series. He has worked with TasDance, performing works by Natalie Weir, Graham Murphy, and Chrissie Parrot. He danced in Funky and Freezing for Sandra Parker's Danceworks, he has worked in New Zealand with Douglas Wright and has performed in five productions for Opera Australia.

Last year Ryan danced in a feature film - *The Book of Revelations*, choreographed by Meryl Tankard. This year, with BalletLab, Ryan toured Amplification to New York City and developed and performed Origami in Melbourne and at the Sydney Opera House.

**Gavin Webber - Performer. Choreographer. Founding member of Splinter Group. dancenorth australia Artistic Director**

Gavin Webber is the Artistic Director of dancenorth australia. Based in Townsville and resident company of Brisbane Powerhouse the company has a new direction involving collaboration and co-production.

Gavin joined Meryl Tankard's Australian Dance Theatre in 1993 and worked with the company for six years before travelling to Europe. He studied with Maguy Marin in Lyon before accepting a position with Ultima Vez in Brussels. He spent three years with the company and was involved in the creation of *In Spite of Wishing and Wanting* and *Inasmuch as Life is Borrow*.

Gavin has created two works for dancenorth australia *nightcafe* and *gravity feed* and collaborated on *underneath* with dancenorth/Splintergroup and Japanese company Batik as part of the Australia/Japan Dance Exchange. In 2004, as a founding member of Splintergroup, he premiered the dance-theatre work *lawn* to audience and critical acclaim at the Brisbane Powerhouse. *lawn* was presented in 2005 in Berlin by Sasha Waltz and Guests and appeared in the Sydney Festival in January 2006 as well as in the Perth Festival and Tanzplattform in Stuttgart.

**Michelle Ryan - dancenorth australia Artistic Manager/Rehearsal Director**

Michelle Ryan worked in Queensland before joining the Meryl Tankard Company in 1992. She worked as a performer/dancer for Tankard in Canberra and Adelaide for seven and a half years, touring extensively throughout Australia and internationally. In 1999 Michelle travelled to Europe after receiving professional development grants. She continued working with Meryl Tankard on such projects as the Andrew Lloyd Webber West End musical *The Beautiful Game*, on which she was Assistant to the Choreographer. She also remounted the work *Nutition* Ballet Gulbenkian of Portugal and more recently remounted *Aurora* on Göteborgsoperans Balett.

Michelle has worked with Gavin Webber on many projects and in 2004 joined Splintergroup for the production *lawn* as Rehearsal Director and Company Manager. She joined dancenorth australia in September 2005 as Artistic Manager.

**Ikuyou Kuroda**

**Performer, Choreographer**

Ikuyo studied ballet under Momoko Tani since age 6, and is currently a member of Momoko Tani Ballet Company. From 1997, she studied contemporary dance at Laban Centre, London, for two years. She joined Kim Itoh +Gorious Future in 2000 and performed both in Japan and abroad. She performed in *Recontres Choreographiques Internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis* (former Bagnole International Choreography Contest) Yokohama Platform, with her first choreographed work "Side B" and received the National Advisory Panel Award. In April 2002, she founded her company Batik and took part in the Dance Biennale Tokyo 2002, Korea and Japan Festival etc. She was awarded the Excellent Work Prize in the competition of SPAC Dance Festival 2003 sponsored by Shizuoka Performing Arts Centre. She performed her awarded piece at "Japanese Performing Arts" held in Moscow in May 2003. Performed at Toyota Choreography Award 2003 and was awarded the grand prize. Batik joined SI Dance Festival in Seoul, Korea and Dance Umbrella in London with the work "Side B" in October 2004. Kuroda was recently awarded Performing Arts Award and Kirin Special Grant for Dance at the Asahi Performing Arts Awards 2004.

**Ioë Shina**

Born in Tokyo. At age 11 Ioë began 10 years of training with the Momoko Tani Ballet Company, then travelled to London and to the Urdang Academy of Performing Arts where she studied dance, choreography and drama. She furthered her training in jazz dance, receiving intensive tuition from Shiela Sangster. She has returned to Tokyo performing in a variety of shows before joining BATIK as a founding member.

**Mamiko Oe**

Mamiko Oe was born and raised in Tokyo. She began her dance training with Kan Horiuchi and Kaori Hayashi at Unique Ballet Theatre. She moved to Massachusetts to attend Dean College where she received A.A with trustee's prize in dance. After graduation, she returned to Tokyo and joined the Kim Itoh +Glorious Future in 2002. Since then she has had the pleasure of dancing with Port+Portail, Shikigata and many others. Mamiko Oe joined BATIK in 2005.

**Sayoko Yamaguchi****Costume Design**

Since the 1970's, Sayoko has worked as a fashion model for collections in both Paris and New York. She has also participated in film, theatre and contemporary dance, both nationally and internationally. In many of these productions, she has also contributed to the costume design. She has established her own brand name collection. She has created costumes for productions of Shakespeare as well as opera. Most recently, she collaborated with a filmmaker on a music mix project, as well as with various artists beyond any strict genre.

**Jiro Matsumoto****Music**

Jiro was born in Nara in 1976. He writes lyrics, music, plays guitar and sings. In addition to his own activities, he has worked with many choreographers and performers including Tanno Ken'ichi, Yun Myung-hee and Ikuyo Kuroda.