

BODY WEATHER - DANCE IN PRACTICE



Triple Alice 1, installation Pam Lofts and photographer Juno Gemes

Dance is primary - the human **is** the body. Our bodies are dancing all the time on the microscopic level without our even knowing it. Our subconscious speaks through the body and our spirit shines through the body. The body has its own intelligence and its own memory. Our senses and the possibilities that lie within our imagination find a meeting place in the body. Dance is an expression of our individual and our common awareness. Dance is a mirror of, and is formative of, our current consciousness.

As an improviser, dance is an act of negotiation - an optimisation of the moment. I make sense of life, of politics, of history, of memory, of my dreams through the body. And Body Weather is the base of my practice.

Body Weather is a dance and performance training that was developed by butoh dancer **Min Tanaka** and his **Mai-Juku Performance Company** in Japan. Drawing from elements of both eastern and western dance, sports training, martial arts and theatre practice, it is a ground training that develops a conscious relation devoid of any specific aesthetic. I was a dancer in the company for six years and since leaving Japan in 1991, I have focussed on adjusting various aspects of the training so as to adapt to Western thinking and to the Western body. In essence Body Weather searches for an emergence of the **intelligence of the body** - the body on its own terms, the body speaking. Min coined the expression a **thinking body**, encouraging a listening - a reflection of the state of constant change both inside and outside the body.

Body Weather is an **open investigation** which can be for anyone, from any background, in any age group, without or with a disability. It is not just for 'professional' dancers and actors alone but is for anyone interested in exploring the language of the body. However it can also be a highly disciplined and demanding professional performance training. I differentiate

strongly between teaching Body Weather within an open public forum, and it's function as a **professional practice** for performance purposes. My main emphasis over the last couple of years has been on developing a company body - an ensemble body which has its base in a Body Weather practice. However, I'm also committed to developing a **Body Weather sphere** which not only underpins the professional activity but also creates a much broader creative environment.

I first started working in Australia in 1988 while I was still based in Japan. I brought a couple of **solo shows** to Sydney one of which toured to Melbourne and in the meanwhile introduced Body Weather here. The workshops I taught seemed to land on very open and fertile ground and because of the nature of Body Weather practice being also suited to work outside, it was a very obvious step to do some work in the **outback** here. That launched a whole series of works around **Lake Mungo** - in far west NSW which also included a couple of group choreographies and in effect launched a number of performers on a path that was very strongly influenced by Body Weather - a **first generation of Australian Body Weather performers**. My last major solo production that was about Mungo, *is.2*, took me to the Northern Territory and to Alice Springs on tour in 1995, which has since initiated a whole stream of work connected with **The Centre**. Meanwhile my partnership with sculptor/dancer Stuart Lynch as a performance duo, **De Quincey/Lynch** (1991-1999) found us working half of the year in Europe and the other half in Australia over a period of 8 years. Besides performance pieces and multimedia productions, we made a series of 3 durational works - *The Durational Trilogy*, a series of 3 pieces of 6, 12 and 24 hours. We also did a vast amount of **interdisciplinary, experimental and sitespecific work** which culminated in *Compression 100 - Sydney* in 1996 where our question was, **Can we dance the city?** Over the 31 days of May we made 186 different performances which included more than 100 collaborations with artists from different disciplines and agegroups at outside and inside venues and sites all over the city.

More recently, receiving the **Choreographic Fellowship** 1998-99 from the Australia Council prompted me to base my work more permanently in Australia so as to project a new stage of development and continuity. Over the last couple of years a group has gradually formed around the Body Weather work and in June 2000 and is now called **De Quincey Co.** We did 6 productions last year which included two site specific works, one in Sydney and one in Tathra on the south coast of NSW. I am also currently directing **TRIPLE ALICE** which is a series of three interdisciplinary Laboratories in the desert of Central Australia. Triple Alice 1 in 1999 brought together more than 80 dancers, actors, sculptors, installationists, new media artists, writers, poets, theorists and scientists for three weeks at Hamilton Downs 110 km nw of Alice Springs. Triple Alice 2 in 2000 was a more intimate event bringing together 16 interstate artists with local artists from different disciplines for a 10 day hothouse while Triple Alice 3 in September/October this year will further the continuity of interdisciplinary exchange alongside a conference hosted by the Department of Performance Studies, University of Sydney.

It is now 10 years since I left Japan. In retrospect I can see the forging of a line of research in my work that pendulates between the city and the desert. I am fascinated by the possibilities that arise in this country as I feel that Australia has an enormous potential. In its geographical positioning and as a pluralist society with a strong and vibrant indigenous contribution, it has capacities that can generate new forms and values precisely because it is not trapped in its own history. It is untrammelled, it has a raw energy. Within the ravelling and unravelling of sensitivity and form, we dwell in language and it is this definition that determines the quality of our conversation. The microprocesses of the body give us insights, perspectives and focus into experiential and phenomenological definition that relays backwards and forwards in our culture. Body Weather ignites me because I feel it has the potential to bring into being new forms of dance and of cutting edge performance. It can act as a generative forum for dance in a pure sense and I believe it can elicit a true freedom of the mind and of the body. I see in dance the most fundamental expression of our consciousness - whilst dance can also act as a seminal conductor in kindling our awareness and the realm of our possibilities.