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## The Australian Ballet releases 2010 annual report

### Continued box office success and another year in the black

The Australian Ballet released its 2010 annual report today following its annual general meeting in Melbourne.

A strong performance at the box office, clever artistic programming and a close eye on budgets, expenditure and general financial performance resulted in another year of solid financial results.

Executive Director Valerie Wilder said all areas of the business worked hard to deliver a modest operating surplus in 2010.

“Our talented dancers and artistic staff presented world-class ballet on the stage, our expert production team worked tirelessly to deliver inspired staging elements, and our administrative and finance teams solidified the company’s record of prudent management while bringing entrepreneurial flair to new areas of the business,” Wilder said.

The Australian Ballet ended 2010 with an operating surplus on core ballet company activities of \$61,651.

Combined with income from the Primrose Potter Australian Ballet Centre and growth of The Australian Ballet Foundation Fund, the consolidated surplus for 2010 is \$5,046,037. The Foundation provides an underlying financial platform for future artistic projects and general sustainability.

Income from box office and performance fees again increased in 2010 to \$21,150,717 – up five per cent from 2009.

It was another extremely busy year of activity with 187 performances presented across Australia and overseas – 164 mainstage performances, 15 performances by the company’s regional touring arm The Dancers Company, seven shows in Japan and one free outdoor performance.

In total, 268,282 people saw The Australian Ballet perform on the stage. Paid capacity across all performances was again high at 83.70%.

In Sydney, paid capacity was 92.4%, the company’s strongest performance in this market in more than a decade.

A continuing challenge for The Australian Ballet is the capped nature of box office revenue, due to scheduling, theatre availability and performance capacity. To maintain ongoing operations, the company continues to rely on support from governments, corporate partners and individual donors.

In February 2010 the company announced a major grant of \$8 million from The Ian Potter Foundation.

Wilder said that \$4 million will be received over five years for the purpose of upgrading the company’s 23-year-old Melbourne headquarters, the Primrose Potter Australian Ballet Centre. The Foundation will also match up to \$4 million of other grants and donations made to The Australian Ballet on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

“We are grateful for the generosity of committed individuals and foundations to help us bring performances to life,” she said. “As we look to the future, philanthropy will play an increasingly important role in securing the company’s sustainability.”

2010 marked the beginning of a three-year curatorial journey towards the company’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012. It also marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of The Australian Ballet’s founder, Dame Peggy van Praagh, and programming celebrated her remarkable achievements.

Repertoire highlights on the mainstage included the first Australian performance of Graeme Murphy’s critically acclaimed *The Silver Rose*, the restaging and restoration of the much-loved *Coppélia* and an encore season of an audience favourite, Peter Wright’s *The Nutcracker*.

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2 Kavanagh Street Southbank  
 Victoria 3006 Australia

#### For media enquiries please contact:

Nicole Lovelock, Media Relations Manager, The Australian Ballet  
 P: 03 9669 2778 M: 0428 135 546  
 E: [nicolel@australianballet.com.au](mailto:nicolel@australianballet.com.au)

Wilder said *The Nutcracker* was the best performing ballet for paid attendances, followed by *Coppélia*, while the all-Australian, contemporary triple bill *Edge of Night* was the strongest selling triple bill program since 1996.

“Increasingly our audiences are embracing a range of programming, from traditional narrative tales to contemporary innovation,” she said.

A major highlight for the company was the successful tour of Graeme Murphy’s *Swan Lake* and *Nutcracker – The Story of Clara* to Tokyo and Nagoya in Japan. It was in Tokyo that Murphy’s *Nutcracker* made its international debut.

2010 was also the first year that The Australian Ballet performed in a rugby stadium when the company turned the hallowed turf of the Penrith Panthers rugby league club in Western Sydney into an outdoor ballet theatre for a free performance.

Ms Wilder said the company has always known that ballet is far from being an elitist past time.

“It’s heartening to see a growing interest in dance in the community,” she said.

“It is not only in theatres that Australians are choosing to experience the art form. For many, taking ballet or dance classes is as much a part of life as weekend sport.”

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, dance is the third most popular leisure activity practiced by young people, ahead of AFL and netball.

In recognition of this active engagement in dance, The Australian Ballet’s education program has expanded significantly over the past few years. In 2010 the company presented 535 education events across the country – an 18% increase in activity from 2009 and a 103% increase from 2007.

Wilder said the company had worked hard to secure the financial stability of the company.

“Now is the time to ensure that our footprint continues to grow and the art form continues to flourish in the next 50 years.”

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