New Zealand Dance Films are receiving top recognition once again on the international scene. Shona McCullagh's short film BREAK has won the Dance Films Association 35th Dance On Camera Festival in the US. The film, written, choreographed and directed by McCullagh features dancers Ursula Robb, Thomas Kiwi and Arlo Gibson, and was produced by Ashley Coupland. BREAK was also runner-up in the ReelDance Festival in Australia, was recently purchased by ABC television in Australia, and has been short listed by The IDN Videodansa Festival in Barcelona for The Barcelona Prize 2007.

Dunedin film maker Daniel Beltion's two short dance films Seismos and Soma Songs featuring renowned New Zealand dance, visual artists and emerging film makers have also been short listed for the Barcelona Prize.

Kristian Larsen has been appointed artistic director of Auckland Late Night Choreographers and Melanie Turner as rehearsal director for Taídance in Launceston, Tasmania. Choreographer Louise Potlki Bryant was awarded one of the three Wild Creations residencies, a joint artist-in-residence programme between the Department of Conservation and Creative New Zealand. Louise of Ngai Tahu descent, plans to spend six weeks at Mt Cook / Aoraki, where she will develop a work integrating dance, video and sculpture which will be performed live as a solo dance work. She would also like to produce a short dance film from the footage shot during the performance of this work at Aoraki.

The 2006 New Zealand International Arts Festival was one of the most successful ever, with many shows selling out and record audience numbers overall. The NZIAF Trust said in its report on the Festival, that it sold over 130,000 tickets and generated a positive economic impact of $33.4 million, mostly in the Wellington region.

Reviews:

Buckehead: The Lost Child

Another spin by Tania Crow in the showing Shift

In a fledgling venue space already pregnant with possibility as well as residue and decay, such as downtown Auckland's Luxembourg Gardens, Tania Crow's work was skillfully realised within highly original and avant-garde choreography introducing potent themes of death and rebirth. It fused ideas and experiences in evocative, ephemeral and layered ways, using a variety of subterranean performance techniques to communicate intricacies of familial suffering, loss and abandonment.

Intersecting the forms of performance art, physical theatre, Butoh and somatic investigations, it engaged the audience in a slow moving andpowerfully intriguing disclosure of themes which involved a diversity of performers all seemingly alienated from one other but caught up nonetheless in the metaphor of the black hole.

An image of abortion was induced somewhere inside this world. It was the final tableau which most obviously indicated the image of a dysfunctional 'family portrait' in a consciously token manner bringing all disparate characters together in a powerful moment of ironic coalescence, which had Tania hanging upside down in a fetal position over the other woman's womb. Images of unwanted children, emotionally violent authority figures, residual trauma and ways to further your performance such as focusing on elements of timing, energy, imagery, and pathways. She also gives a very useful tip suggesting that if the viewer is having problems learning the movements they may like to view the TV image in a mirror. However it would have added greatly to the learning if Anita and the class had been filmed from the back view demonstrating each exercise. She does say that this class will not mastered in one go and encouraged participants to rewind and review the DVD.

The dance class follows a typical kind of format for a contemporary class: warm up consisting of exercises mainly in place, the main body of the class followed by three travelling sequences, two for solo performers and one duet. The three sequences are longer and vary in content, providing different challenges to the class participants. The class is then completed with a warm down.

Three female dancers and one male dancer join Anita in the class to help demonstrate and illustrate different personal styles and movement variations. While this is a laudable aim, unfortunately the two dancers at the sides are often in shadow or out of camera making it hard to see their interpretations of many of the exercises. This is further compounded by the male dancer wearing black. In contrast Anita is always in light colours and it is easy to see her execution of the exercises.

She clearly explains each successive exercise as she demonstrates them. They are broken down into teachable chunks, then progressively each bit is added to the previous one to complete the exercise in full. At the end of the teaching phrase you see the exercise danced by Anita and the class to the music.

Step by step progressions are comprehensive and documented on this DVD in several ways. An excellent glossary section clearly explains the vocabulary used through animation and a written brief. This is very useful and the pair of elongated animated legs clearly has the moves and grooves. A resource like this would be very useful in secondary schools, foundation courses as well as personal collections.

Sue Cheesman

Move It can be purchased from DANZ phone 04 801 9885 or www.danz.org.nz/education_resources.php