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Dalman, Elizabeth Cameron (b. 23 October 1934, Adelaide, Australia)

Summary
In a career that has spanned over sixty years, Elizabeth Cameron Dalman has been shaped by a politically progressive view of the role of dance and choreography in Australia and has created works inspired by contemporary paintings, music, political and artistic figures as well as the cosmologies of the natural world. Inspired by her involvement with European and American modern dance, she established the first professional modern dance company in Australia in 1965, Australian Dance Theatre, and developed dances that were engaged with social issues, such as Aboriginal and women's rights. From her early works to the present, she has had a passion for the Australian landscape and used dance to celebrate its beauty and environmental fragility. As a modern dance ambassador, Dalman initiated the first tour of an Australian dance company to South-East Asia in the 1970s and established an international profile for Australian dance. Always an educator, she continues her choreographic practice with Mirramu Dance Company, as well as her participation in international collaborations with artists from Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, Senegal and Austria. She was awarded an Order of Australia for her contribution to contemporary dance in Australia, and in 2015 was appointed Patron of the 50th anniversary celebrations.

Training
Dalman studied classical ballet as well as the barefoot dancing of the English modern dancer, Margaret Morris with Nora Stewart. Like many expatriates who felt the isolation of the arts in Australia, she left Adelaide in 1957 for London where she studied with Audrey de Vos, Maria Fay and Kathleen Crofton followed by a season touring the Netherlands in the Ballet der Lage Landen and later as the lead in *My Fair Lady*. In quest of a more systematic and enquiring approach to dancing, Dalman joined the famed Kurt Jooss School in Essen learning from Anna and Kurt Jooss and Anne Woolliams. Here, she met the black artist and dancer, Eleo Pomare, who was to be a formative influence on her future career - he introduced Dalman and fellow students to American modern dance, stressing how to physicalize emotional content and for choreography to give expression to complex ideas and political experience. Together they formed an inter-racial dance company in Amsterdam and became active members of the experimental art community of the 1960s. Pomare choreographed many works especially for and with Dalman, sometimes asking Dalman to undertake rigorous observations of street-life in order to find a meaningful gestural vocabulary to represent the sufferings of reality.

Major contributions to the field and to modernism
Upon her return to Australia, and facing a conservative artistic context, Dalman formed a new company, Australian Dance Theatre (ADT) with the intenton of creating a choreographic platform to shape dance about Australian identity, both its unique struggles and its environment. From her European training, she was confident about the value of dance to 'explore new forms of movement, new ways of presentation and a new voice'. This artistic and political vision led ADT to become the first modern dance company to receive government subsidy from the newly formed Australian Council of the Arts in 1973.

In development of acquired techniques, Dalman's dancers use a grounded physical vocabulary, including strong shapes that extend from consciousness of the pelvis and torso through to animated hands and face. With enjoyment of rhythmic complexity, Dalman also encouraged improvisation and the ADT dancers had regular 'jamming' sessions with a jazz combo. Her approach to choreography often involved a collaborative stimulus, such as responding to a painting by Australian artists, Drysdale, Olsen, Tucker and Daws; or a protest song, and one of her most memorable works – *This Train* (1966) – was created to the music of the folk group, Peter, Paul and Mary. Often influenced by mood, texture, weight, syncopated percussion, she veered away from compositional responses to classical music by interacting with new forms of synthesised music and spoken sound. She sought out composers who made music inspired by the Australian landscape, such as Peter Sculthorpe and Richard Meale, as well as commissioning new works from musicians, such as Nicholas Lyon and Sylvan (Schmoe)Elhay. In this respect, dance modernism was a means to respond to the times in which she lived; and the power of an expressive body became enhanced by engagement with other art forms that shape contemporary experience.

In one of her most innovative production, Dalman collaborated with a team of experimental artists in a *son et lumiere* production, *Time-riders: the oldest continent*, for the 1970 Adelaide International Festival of Arts, subsequently touring to Perth, Sydney and Melbourne. This radical spectacle included large scale lighting projections by Stan Ostoja Kotkowski and electronic music by the Dutch composer Henk Badings and was the first large scale multi-media event in Australia.

Always a persuasive advocate for modern dance as a universalising medium, Dalman also established educational programs and an intensive touring schedule to outback towns. She was the first dance artist to 'professionalise' contemporary dance methods in her company and to introduce international teachers such as Jimmy Truitte (Alvin Ailey), Myron Nadel, Bob Beswick (Alwin Nikolais) and Eleo Pomare when there were no tertiary dance institutions in the 1960s. She thus trained Australia's first generation of contemporary choreographers and dancers, including Cheryl Stock (Dance North), John Nobbs and Jennifer Barry (Sydney Dance Company). Several artistic directors later, ADT remains the longest-standing contemporary dance company in Australia with a continuous history of innovation and international excellence.

Her vision for Australian dance has always included recognition that Australia is a multicultural society, and as such, ADT was the first Australian dance group to be ethnically inclusive, foster artistic exchange and to undertake significant international tours. In 1968, for instance, ADT toured Switzerland, Italy and Holland, while in 1969 they toured eight countries including the Phillipines, PNG, India, Taiwan and Hong Kong (where they made the first colour TV dance special). One of several offshoots of her influence was the formation of National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA) and Bangarra Dance Theatre through her sponsorship of the black dance company, Eleo Pomare and Dancers, to Adelaide in 1972. In 1975, Dalman returned to Europe where she resumed her role as a major interpreter and teacher of American modern dance. There, she served as rehearsal director for Danksen in Amsterdam, and assisted Anna Sokolow with reconstruction of her work, *Rooms* and *The Troubled Sleeper*, as well as mounting Doris Humphrey's *Day on Earth*.

In addition to leading a University dance curriculum in the early 2000s, Dalman maintains her collaboration with companies and choreographers in Japan, Taiwan, Senegal and Austria. She continues to teach and foster local and international dance artists, by leading exploratory workshops, and developing projects that recreate earlier works for a new generation. In 2014, for instance, she created *Mirror Image* for Danceology from Taiwan and in 2015, mounted a retrospective season entitled *Fortuity* in Canberra. 'I believe to dance is a way to the soul, to the very centre of our being, to experience the life force within us all, and our connectedness to all living things. I know dance is way of communicating feelings at very deep level.' Shaped by this philosophy, she directs her present company, Mirramu Dance Company now running for thirteen years. This practice, along with her other dance networks, nurtures a richly alternative arts community who benefit from her generous vision and long experience.

Selected List of Works
For ADT: Horizons, Blues for Two and *Family Portrait* (1965), *This Train, Retrospect, Hallucinations, Primitive Rituals and Bushfire* (1966), *Three Songs, Bushfire*, *Landscape* and *Sundown* (1967), *Sun and Moon, Didn't it Rain and Generation Gap* (1968/9), *Homage to Botticelli* (1969), *Creation* (1969/70), *Rondel* (1971) *Release of an Oath* and *Leaving* (1972), *Inside* and *Children of Time* (1974), *Opal, Lemon Peace Sky* and *Primitive Cry* (1975).

Scangiarusca – a site-specific work in a quarry in the Adelaide Hills *(1988), Bella Domna (*1990, 1991 and 1993*), So – In Search of Sophia* (1994) *Leading to Flight* (1996), *The Fountain of Age* (2000), *Silk* (2002*), WWW – Water, Water, Water* (2002), *Crossing Tracks* (2002) *and Crossing Tracks II* (2003*)* in collaboration with *Grace Hsiao Dance Theatre of Taipei,* and *Red Sun, Red Earth* (2003), a collaborative production with the Spirit of the Land Foundation, Ananguku Arts and Culture Aboriginal Corporation and the Mobius Kiryuho Institute, Japan*, Waves of the Desert* (2006*), Cry Baby* (2007)*, Tango Lament* (2008), *River* (2009), *Sapling to Silver* (2011), *Heartquake* (2011), *Voices from Chernobyl* (2012), and *Morning Star*, a collaboration with Yolgnu artists from Arnhem Land (2013).

Dancer of Pomare choreographies including: *Spiritual*, *Gin Woman Distress, Hex, Limousine for Janis.*

Archival material
Dalman, Elizabeth Cameron (1992) *Oral History interview by Nanette Hassall*, Ref. 396134, National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra, Australia.

References and further reading
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Rachel Fensham, University of Melbourne, July 2015