

# A PRACTITIONER'S PERSPECTIVE

## Loughlan Prior



Continuing our series of articles to give a voice to artists practising in NZ, in this issue we hear from Loughlan Prior.

### How could you have been better prepared coming out of your training?

The only way to gauge what it is truly like to work as a professional is to work in the profession. I think it is imperative that students are given the opportunity to take up secondment/apprenticeship roles with companies. I was incredibly lucky to work with the West Australian Ballet and RNZB as a student, and I learnt so much regarding professional life. I would urge dancers in their final stages of training to actively seek out these opportunities in preparation for the real world.

### Do you have a favourite type of dance?

I love dance, I watch anything I can get my hands on. When I'm creating work, I like to use a variety of dance styles, fusing different genres together to create a sort of hybrid product. I was recently part of Tempo Dance Festival in a mixed programme full of every type of dance you can imagine. The show was a knock out; so diverse and engaging.

### Why do you choose to make dance?

Making things makes me happy. If it's not dance, it's design, or film-making – I have a compulsion to always be creatively stimulated. I love working closely with people to shape a project, and dance-making is by nature a very social, collaborative practice.

### What opportunities do you see for dance in the future?

The future is an inspiring place; creatively the potential to 'make things' is endless, and that's really exciting to me. The next couple of months are quite full-on. In January, I'll be creating a new ballet in Dresden, Germany for a cast of 24 dancers (the largest group I've ever worked with) and I have a new film project in the pipeline. RNZB's Artistic Director, Patricia Barker, has commissioned me to present a new work for Grand Rapids Ballet, where she has been

LOUGHLAN PRIOR  
PHOTO: FAISAL SYED



BY LOUGHLAN PRIOR

A born and bred Aussie, Loughlan Prior made the move across the ditch and has since carved out his own little place in the New Zealand dance scene developing his own choreographic practice. His works have been presented both nationally and internationally by the Royal New Zealand Ballet (RNZB) and the New Zealand School of Dance (NZSD) along with independent projects for fashion shows and film festivals. His latest work *LARK*, featuring Sir Jon Trimmer, was presented at the 2017 Tempo Dance Festival to much acclaim.

### Tell us about your background.

I'm an Aussie/Kiwi choreographer and performer, a graduate of NZSD, and have been a member of RNZB since 2010. Alongside my performance career, I've established a choreographic practice in Wellington to create a variety of film, stage and installation works.

Director since 2010, to premiere in March 2018. This is really exciting as it will be my first time creating work in the United States.

#### What challenges do dancers face today?

We all face the issue of time, and developing work under the duress of time constraints. For dancers and choreographers alike, a perfect world would see an increase in development time for new works and the ability to let a new creation 'marinate' for longer periods before being presented.

#### Tell us about the project that arose from the awarding of the Tup Lang Choreographic Award.

I am incredibly grateful to Creative New Zealand for their award, which allowed me to attend the Assemblée Internationale in Toronto to premiere *Curious Alchemy*, a new ballet I devised for NZSD. Director Garry Trinder invited me to construct this new work as a reflection of the school's current identity as it celebrates its 50th Anniversary. I was immensely proud of the four dancers who represented New Zealand on such a prestigious international platform.

#### How have you found the process of developing works for dancers of varying ages and abilities?

I recently had the pleasure of creating a duet for Sir Jon Trimmer and William Fitzgerald; a toast to two different generations of performer. The approach to working with Sir Jon, who at 78 is a legend of the New Zealand stage, exuding charisma and experience, was an incredibly fascinating contrast to working with students who are at the starting line of their careers. The approach to dispatching cognitive information and generating choreography could not have been more different, however the goal for both works remained the same – to display each performer for their individual strengths and unique qualities.

#### Do you have any advice for independent artists?

One of the biggest things about artistic independence is putting aside time for the development and exploration of your craft. Make time for yourself to be alone and experiment. Make a little something every day, no matter how small or simple, and set yourself creative goals to challenge and refine your practice with others. ■

For more information on Loughlan's work go to [loughlanprior.com](http://loughlanprior.com)

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**Eileen May Norris.**  
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