

Wombat Radio

Richard Cilli and Melinda Tyquin

**Melinda: Hey Richard so what are you actually going to do for March Dance?**

Richard: In March Dance I am performing in a work that I have had a hand in producing it's called **Recital** and it's a work for two performers myself and a percussionist called Claire Edwardes, it's been Directed by Gideon Obarzanek and it's got original sound by Claire Edwardes and DJ extraordinaire Paul Mac.

Melinda: Wow

Richard: and we have a great lighting design by Bosco Shaw as well. So very excited to be performing something that is my first sort of... work that I have initiated myself and even though I haven't really created it, I have had a big hand in it's creation.

Melinda: it's inception...

Richard: yea, that's right

Melinda: So it sounds like maybe one of the first projects that you feel like your voice as an artist might be heard, or your desires as an artist.

Richard: Absolutely

Melinda: but you have got some great collaborators on board.

Richard: Yea we have a really great team and it is for me the beginning of what I see as my journey as an independent artist, which is coming quite late, I am in my thirties now and I've danced for a lot of dance companies around the country and internationally but this is my first time really sort of initiating something where it's what I want to do. Yes its exciting it's scary it is actually quite scary

Melinda- Hey when is it on...

Richard- We open on February 28 and March 1 and 2, at Leenox Theatre, Riverside Theatre, through FORM dance projects

Melinda- I am going to come and see it

Richard: Yes come along

Melinda: I work opposite the Riverside theatre

Richard: yay one more ticket, yay

Richard and Melinda: hahaha cool

Richard: In the larger sense, what am I doing? I am still performing, that is really important to me and it will continue to be. Performing for quite a few choreographers. I am teaching that is really important to me as well, I teach counter technique and I am also living... and enjoying living in Sydney and trying to strike a great balance between working and not working or living and working and finding the way that all fits together as a freelancer.

Melinda: Have you lived here all your life?

Richard: No I am from Perth and I moved to Sydney in 2009 I have had a few little escapes away but it keeps drawing me back, I think this is really home.

Melinda: I am a bit similar to you as well I was grew up here, born here, tried to move away but..

Richard: hahah never really happened

Melinda: So for March Dance I am the program facilitator for a workshop series called **The Right Foot**, it's a program run by **DirtyFeet** and it is our community outreach program that looks at dance inclusivity. So creating workshop environments where people can learn dance technique together but you might all identify with a different level of ability, perhaps you may identify with a disability as well. And so we do run this program every year it has been running since 2011 from memory and I came on board in 2014 and as the program manager my job is to find artists to facilitate the workshop, artists with and without disability that can create a safe environment for artists of all abilities to learn from each other and together in the one space. Normally our program is a 5-6 day workshops and we meet every Saturday for 5 or 6 weeks, and then we would share something we call it an informal presentation with family and friends we started shared at the Lennox Theatre as of last year so it was great to put our performance techniques that we learned in the studio to practice in the theatre.

For March Dance we are going to do a one-off workshop and it is a great way for us to re-connect with our artists that we work with each year and to get new people on board so they can see what The Right Foot is about and to see what the inclusive dance practice is about and how everyone can get involved as well.

So we will be at the Redfern Town Hall in March. What is really great is that it is free for everybody. It is a full day of moving together a day normally starts with a warm up it will have theatre and movement tasks in that warm up and then look at developing our techniques together, practicing our techniques, a lot of contemporary floor work, locomoting through the space, looking at how you use imagery to channel some of those techniques and develop your technique. So some of it is task based or score based and other is movement for movements sake, moving in an aerobic kind of way and then we always have a lovely social break together, we share fruit we share

stories and share things about our practice. Following that in the afternoon we do an hour and fifteen minutes of creative practice together, we will work on movement scores, imagery techniques, we create a sound scape, a moving scape we won't be sharing it with anyone this time, but it will be nice to share it with each other.

The facilitators for this particular workshop is one artist called Chris Bunton he has been working for DirtyFeet and The Right Foot program in particular since as long as I have been here 2014 he was a participant prior to being employed as a facilitator, he has his own practice in acting and he has couple of great films coming out at the moment, one of my favourite film of his is called Down Under which is black comedy, an Australian black comedy based on the Cronulla riots you should watch it, it is very good. He has great scene of comedic timing and can also do serious characters as well. Chris has a passion for guiding people in finding their own movement style he has a methodical way of helping people find a set movement score but there own style within it. And the other artist is Elle Evangelista, she is an artist who studied at WAPPA I don't know if you ever met her there

Richard: Yes we have danced together

Melinda: She hails from Perth as well, living in Sydney now

Richard: one of the steps dancers

Melinda: And she has been with The Right Foot for 3-4 years now she is a DirtyFeet marketing and communications staff member and Elle has her own practice in the integrated dance scene, she has started to learn Auslan, she is seeking roles in arts accessibility and administration roles and ensuring festival and art in general is accessible to anybody. I will also be involved in the program my job is to pull together some of our technique exercises the progressions of them and to give everyone a quick snap shot of the kinds of things that we do at The Right Foot and the kinds of things you can achieve by dancing and moving with like-minded people.

Richard: So it sounds to me like it's going to be a really fantastic day for anyone who is interested in finding interesting ways to move or be a performer, no matter their skill level or ability level.

Richard: I want to come, what's the date?

Melinda: Come! It is on the 16 March, at Redfern Town Hall

Richard: oh amazing

Melinda: It starts at 10am

Richard: Cool

Melinda: We want anyone to come

Richard: I would love to come

Melinda: There is a bit of an age guideline in our marketing material but really anyone who wants to move we will welcome you.

Richard: Fantastic, that's great

**Melinda: So what do you hope, sharing this new work with audiences, with Sydney audiences is going to achieve, what do you hope in terms of the direction it might send you in your current practice?**

Richard: Well, I hope that this work, first of all, I hope it's good, I think it's good.

Melinda: I am sure it will be good

Richard: I hope it has along life we are really excited it has been 3 years in the making and applying for different grants and many stages of development and there has been a long journey and we are finally here and it would be a shame if it didn't go any further. I think we hope to share this work with more places straight after FORM in Parramatta we are going to be performing in Dance Massive

Melinda: Brilliant

Richard: So that is really exciting as well and we hope that it will be a great platform for both of us as performers and we will get to share it, far and wide.

Melinda: That is great going from one festival to the next

Richard: Fingers crossed yea, and yes that is right with March Dance we didn't know, we were already doing it and now we found out that we have been added to March Dance is really exciting. It is really amazing and really exciting and I hope it does go along way and I hope that does mean that more works like this get made for the two of us and for me as a model of engaging with a choreographer to make a work for me as a performer, I think it's a model that works and doing a lot of the administrative side has been the first time I have really done something like this and it has been challenging but I have been around Claire who is the Artistic Director of ensemble Offspring and our producer Erin Milne in Melbourne who massively adept in doing this so hope the skills I have gained in doing this will be applicable further down the tack.

Melinda: Sounds like it will be

Richard: Fingers crossed

Melinda: Enjoy Dance Massive, have you performed their before?

Richard: Never, I am actually doing two works in Dance Massive, this one and one for Chunky Move as well

Melinda: That's a good baptism

Richard: yea, of fire, hahah

Melinda: To be performing for the whole two weeks

Richard: Yea, first week with Chunky and then the second week our own show, Recital.

Melinda: that will be great, its really nice, really nice energy there...

**Richard: How about you, what do you hope to achieve?**

Melinda: I suppose we have touched on this a little bit, but just to encourage all bodies to move and to move together and to not be afraid of not looking or being the same or feeling the same or looking the same, but just to experience movement in its true form. We had an artist in integrated practice Sarah-Vyne Vassallo help us establish our program and one of her things that she talks about is that your 100% is different every day and whatever your 100% is, only you know what that is, so whatever we see on March 16 in the room together is probably going to be something totally different the next time we all meet together. To introduce that to new audiences, new people and then in turn, obviously encourage more people to come to our program at the end of the year where we do have our 6-day workshops, but in essence because we only see our artist once a year normally at the end of each year to keep fuelling them a little earlier on in the year. We'd love to do more things with them, it's a time and a funding thing that that stops us from doing that and often there aren't a lot of programs like The Right Foot where people can get together on a regular basis, develop skills, together develop relationships, develop a common understanding of language especially in integrated dancing, they are quite sporadic, we love that we can do it every year but connect with our artists earlier on in the year check in, see where they are see, what projects they have coming up and then meet up again later in October.

Richard: And that continuity is really important, have you seen the benefit from that in the past?

Melinda: Yes, yes and the amount of people that return to The Right Foot is quite high and so we have been able to develop our exercises to progress each year and so yea it is nice, nice to see

Richard: Cool

Melinda: Nice to see the friendships as well

**Melinda: So you have spoken a little bit about the behind the scenes stuff that you have had to get involved with could you tell us a little bit more about how you are doing this, this new great work, what is the process?**

Richard: Basically, this work is a, how do I put this, it's a work for two people who are one dancer and one percussionist there is a hint of, basically, I am going to start again, sorry Matt you can edit this out...

Richard: We are two performers undertaking a dance and music recital in the daggiest sense of terms, and what begins as something that is a just a plain old recital or investigation into movement and music something the relationship between the two performers starts to emerge in a way that's a little bit disturbing, there is an element of competition and there is an element of rivalry and a strange tension between these two performers and these two art forms, almost like there this weird brother and sister act that have been raised outside of society and they think this is normal, there some unexpected things that start happening during the show, that might not normally be seen in a music or dance recital they believe they are part of this thing and I think the effect by the end is that you really start to understand these two quite virtuosic performances the connection between movement and music and there inter relationship and their reliance, at time there is a tension there, there is a fraught nature and some say dance can't exists without music and some say you should dance to music or we investigated that in a bit of a tongue and cheek way.

Melinda: How has it been playing with those concepts in the studio, those power shifts?

Richard: It's definitely played out in a very real way because we have very different ways of working and very different methods of understanding how to do things, a skill one of us has, the other absolutely doesn't have is, we are just left, it has been a great negotiation I think. For example, Claire is such an amazing musician, she doesn't need to practice ever and I need to practice a lot in order to do the things I need to do, so those differences, also in my inability to understand the complex musicality of what she's able to create, these phrases of poly rhythms and things like that. There is such a difference there, there has been a huge skill exchange, it's meant the outcome the resulting work really takes off and by the end we go somewhere really unexpected and really quite static I think.

Melinda: Wow, sounds really engaging, especially as an artist to be involved in that process and see how it plays out, consciously make choices in that space but also be taken over by what happens and be surprised where you arrive at the end.

Richard: Yea, that way we talk about what does it mean to collaborate, are we sharing our practice, are we doing our things next to each other how do they interrelate do we resolve to connect or do we resolve to disconnect, that it's a space that can provide a metaphor for a lot of ways and how society relates to society these days.

Melinda: How we come across the foreign or the unknown

Richard: Absolutely yea

Melinda: And when we chose to engage and when we chose to disengage.

Richard: Yea, and there's this weird sort of co-dependence that starts to, this shadow, reliance on each other, there is a little bit dark that comes out as well.

**Richard: Could you tell me a little bit more about how The Right Foot is going to happen?**

Melinda: So I suppose my job between now and the workshop is to look back at some of the tasks we have done, but more importantly look back at the feedback from our participants, after each workshop we do quite a rigorous feedback process, and each year there are simple questions that ask you to reflect on which tasks you connected with the most, which you found most challenging, what you want to do again, what you want to see more of, take a sample of all those things, look at the participants that are coming think about new participants that haven't danced with us before, what do I want them to get from it, what will Chris want them to get from it, what will Elle want them to get from it, and slowly piece together the jigsaw puzzle of the tasks we will do.

We will start the day with a warm-up that is quite gestural in nature and slowly introducing people into this new environment of integrated practice, we will do some tasks when we get to know each other and get to know our own bodies and how we are going to move today, as I mentioned before there is this whole notion we like to work with, your 100% for the day so that's almost like each time you come into the studio you have to re-introduce yourself to your body.

Richard: Your today body

Melinda: We will then shift our focus to a more rigorous practice, some set technique exercises, it will include some floor work, some use of different aids walls, chairs so that people can modify movement and to suit their body of where it is at for the day, travelling down the space using different images to achieve that, then we break for lunch...it's my favourite part of the day, with fruit to share and then we will get together in the afternoon and create more of a compositional movement score together based on an idea, based on a stimulus we work a lot on connections and how we connect with people around us and how we connect with the space around us. It will be highly improvised towards the end of the day and that is really lovely to see everyone respond in their own natural way, and I actually love participating in it, obviously I am there to facilitate but a lot of the artists are quite independent and make their own choices so once you start to set off those different movement scores and images and ideas that you are working with its just like a bit of a free for all, play together, creating art live in the space.

Richard: Fantastic, great.

Melinda: I am really looking forward to it.

**Richard: And how do you think, it's changed over the years what direction do you think it has taken?**

Melinda: I mean we are definitely each year being able to facilitate more disability led practice, Chris as a participant all the way back when the program started slowly working his way into the artist support role and last year stepping up into a facilitator role, so I suppose because as we have run the program for a large or significant amount of time, I mean it is still young, we are starting to see the cohort level of skill improving each year and being able to challenge them in new ways in different ways which is also challenging for us as well. How can we take what we know and shift it and keep building on it, and whilst being open to new people coming into the space, open to where we are on that particular day, where our bodies are on that day. So it is almost teaching people how to push themselves, extend themselves within a model that everyone can participate in.

Richard: That sounds like it's extending you and providing experiences to a wider group of people.

Melinda: It is very responsive and the facilitators do constantly change and our artists support workers do constantly change like who is leading the tasks who is driving the direction of where we are going in each particular movement, we almost make it like a shuffling task, passing the baton to one person as they guide the group and then another person taking over, and that's really lovely as well, it's very live and instigated by the people in the space and that also sees us at some point handover to the participants, which is great as well.

Richard: You really do have to be there for what's actually happening in the room in those situations, don't you, you can prepare as much as you like, but on the day, it's the day, your right it's your today body

Melinda: It is the live art moment, it is the performance.

Richard: Yea that's right and it's the exchange between the facilitators and the participants.

Melinda: And it is as real as it can get, which is nice, you are right it doesn't matter how much you plan, we put tiny little time frames and guidelines but often it's like ok we are going to scrap that whole thing we are in this world and we are going to stay here for as long as it plays out, which is great. Although Anthea, DirtyFeet Director, she really likes it when we stick to time.

Richard and Melinda: hahaha

**Melinda: I think you have touched on this a little bit but could you reflect a little deeper on why you are doing this, why are you doing it right now, what's this moment about?**

Richard: For me this is really about, I have touched on this a little bit, this moment for me is about moving from, moving into becoming an independent artist and starting to develop a practice there is a lot of talk about what is your practice and mine involves



a lot of things, but it is also changing a percentage of one thing to another thing, starting to understand that. For me it is starting to redefine what it means to be working in dance in my body as time goes by. I guess there is a pre-conceived idea that as your body gets older your obliged to move into teaching or choreography or give up but I don't really see that happening I don't at least yet, performing is still really important to me. I do choreography I have made a few works at WAPPA, Sydney Dance Company, Australian Ballet, here and there but definitely not throwing in the towel to being a maker, I think my practice in understanding my body, and I think that is because your body is such an amazing mystery and I am there to attend to it and listen to it every day and that is far to alluring to give up I think and some days it's painful and some days it's tiring but that's why I do it. It is a tricky space it think I am in this turning point in my career where I don't really know what direction things are going to take but I am taking a bunch of risks and that's exciting, and as I said it is a really exciting moment I am about to premier this work and a few others and still really busy so it's great.

Melinda: Sounds like there is no other choice but to be doing it right now.

Richard: Absolutely, sometimes I do think oh I will just go and be a physio or a flight attendant or something you know... but yea I think, I don't ever think about those things for too long, I am really in the process and very entrenched in actually the day to day of the doing of the dancing, which is a joy, an absolute joy and I will just keep doing that.

Melinda: Imagine if you have never done this before, if you have never moved your body in these ways before, I sometimes think that when I watch people walking down the street, I wonder if they have every waved their body like a candle and sunk to the ground like a puddle of ice melting, like what would that feel like to never have done those things before...I feel worried for people when I think of that.

Richard: And what a revolutionary act it is to be doing those things, as a body, in today's society, to be able to experience science and literature and poetry and emotion and any other concept that we might understand cognitively as humans we experience it physically and that's a gift and a small rebellion in this society so I do wonder what it is like for people who don't do it. It is also easy to forget this separate skill, we are these wizards who are going to save the world, I think but you know it is important to remember that and that's why we do it and that's what this is about these days, at least it's certainly about that for me.

Melinda: I agree, with The Right Foot, part of the reason we do it we obviously want our programs to reach a range of artists, with a range of interest, with a range of abilities, but another reason why The Right Foot was originally established was to provide a platform for artists of any culture, any physical background, any intellectual capacity to come together to experience dance but to then do something with that experience, not just give it as a taster and leave and never connect again. We are really conscious about ways in which we can start to feed artists into other streams of our programs, we have another program called The Choreographic Lab which is a platform for artists Choreographers to apply for space and to work two weeks with a

group of dancers, emerging artists or some established that want a rigorous practice for two weeks, working on a new concept or a new process, with a new group of people and we really looking at ways and we can support artists that might identify with a disability to create their own work in a supportive environment like any other emerging artist would get to do, so that's our Choreographic Lab program and The Right Foot we really want to keep feeding artists through that and part of The Choreographic Lab program is not just about supporting choreographers but supporting the dancers that want to practicing in the art of making and supporting a choreographer in making and we have been able to do that over the years, get artists that identify with different disabilities engaged in the process of making, be supported in that process as well the support might look different for each person, sometimes it might having someone called a creative enabler in the space, that maybe just needs to help a body or help an artist's body move, or experience the movement in a way in their body that still signifies what the choreographer is asking them but might look totally different to what's been demonstrated, or it might be providing someone who can audio describe what's happening in the room for someone that has a vision impairment. So that's one great thing about The Right Foot we can identify artists that need extra support; experience different artistic process that they might not get access to, one is through our program Choreographic Lab program and the other is through a program called Out of the Studio, which takes works that may have been touched on or first explored in the Choreographic Lab program and puts them in their first stage development in a theatre, with minimal lighting, with an audience, seating bank in the platform of a question and answer realm, where they get to test works. Emerging artist in general especially those in the independent sector the chance to perform don't come very often always and especially for artists with disability there are not a lot of training programs out there to support them through the kinds of things we might experience at University, where you get formalised training you get multiple performance opportunities, and that's what we hope The Right Foot really does, start to feed people through these more formal training programs that everyone should have access too, it's great, I love it.

Richard: Sounds like in essence you are really trying to bring dance or a connection to the body, to all kinds of people in Sydney and for them to be able to do something with that.

Melinda: And for audiences as well.

Richard: Yea, yea, what an amazing thing to do.

Melinda: Yes it is very fun. I suppose we have spoken a lot about what we are doing, what's the process, how did we get here, what do we hope for it, is where I was leading to next, which would be this hope, maybe for this current work or maybe for life.

Richard: I think in a bigger sense I hope, someone asked me the other day how do you see yourself going about this, I think the insight I have had recently I want to bring people to the thing and help them engage with the thing and help them create

a passion about dance or art in the way that I have, and so enabling that through empathy, through sharing, be it performing, teaching, choreography, or engaging with people in any other way that's my biggest hope that people get to experience this gift I have been given, this life in dance.

Melinda: That is interesting because my hope is that people come, that people get to experience it, that new people come that old people come, that new connections are made, that there be fun, that the space be created that enables people to have fun to let their guard down, to just be with other people in a room moving, experiencing things, free of judgement and free of judgement of ourselves, really clear the mind, almost like a three hour meditation, not even realise what you have done at the end but know you have achieved something, you feel different, like you have moved, moved somewhere.

Richard: Incredible.

Melinda: Thanks for sharing stuff about your practice with me.

Richard: Thank you too.

Melinda: Anything else you want to say

Richard: No I think that is it, great thanks Melinda.

Melinda: No problem, I will see your work soon.