

Australia's Queensland Ballet to perform at UCSD's Mandeville Auditorium October 15

October 4, 1996

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The Queensland Ballet of Australia, touring for the first time in the United States, will present *Pirates! The Ballet* at 8 p.m. Oct. 15 in Mandeville Auditorium at the University of California, San Diego.

Pirates! The Ballet is a full company dance adaptation of Gilbert & Sullivan's comic opera, *Pirates of Penzance*. Nineteen dancers, clad in swashbuckling and brightly colored costumes, are featured.

Not only dancers, as were cast in the original *Pirates! The Ballet* when it premiered in Brisbane in 1991, but four singers have been added to the production so that audiences may both experience the body language of the dancers as they interpret the music, and also hum or sing along to their favorite Gilbert & Sullivan tunes.

The Oct. 15 performance of *Pirates! The Ballet* -- complete with vocals -- is sponsored by the UCSD University Events Office.

Dance, nevertheless, is *Pirates!* focus. Dance styles vary from classical ballet to musical comedy to tap dancing to funky improvisations.

As choreographer Daryl Gray says, "Famous (*Pirates!*) characters like Frederick and Mabel, the Major-General and the pirate king all establish their character by what they do and how they act, not what they say. The dancers are singing with their bodies."

In its 36th year, the Queensland Ballet began as the Lisner Ballet Company in Brisbane in 1960, under the leadership of dancer/choreographer and entrepreneur Charles Lisner. The company was created to encourage the development of an Australian ballet style through commissioning works by the country's choreographers, composers and designers. It fostered wider understanding and appreciation of dance in Australia by being the first ballet ensemble to tour regional areas.

The company became the Queensland Ballet in 1962. In 1978, Harold Collins, who had been a principal soloist with the company, took over as artistic director, maintaining Lisner's commitment to the creation of a dance style that is uniquely Australian through new interpretations of ballet classics.

Under Collins' choreographic direction, the Queensland Ballet has presented ballets such as *Carmen*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Nutcracker*, *The Ice Maiden*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Rite of Spring*.

For *Pirates!*, however, Collins turned to New York, bringing in choreographer Gray to add a bit of Broadway glitz and variety to the Australian production of this comic piratical adventure. Gray feels it is important for ballet companies to take on new works, such as *Pirates!*, and says that today it is "crucial in order to keep moving forward in the profession."

Gray has choreographed musicals such as Kiss Me Kate, The King and I, Grease, and 42nd Street. He has also created works for such companies as the American Ballet Theatre, Joffrey Ballet, the Royal Ballet of Belgium, Jeunne Ballet de France and Les Ballet Jazz de Montreal.

Tickets for the Mandeville Center performance of Pirates! The Ballet are \$30, general admission; \$25 for UCSD faculty, staff and senior citizens, and \$20 for students. Tickets are available at the UCSD Box Office, 534-6467, and at Ticketmaster outlets. For further information, call the UCSD University Events Office at 534-4090.

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