

Australasian
Dance
Collective

MATRIX



Choreographed by
Stephanie Lake &
MA Bo

Education Notes

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01 Introduction

These education notes have been developed to accompany Australasian Dance Collective's performance of Matrix and associated school workshops.

They aim to assist secondary school dance teachers with integrating the elements of Matrix into dance classrooms.

All activities directly relate to the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) Years 7-10 Dance Curriculum as well as the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) Dance 2019 v1.1 General Senior Syllabus for Years 11-12.



02 Before the Show

Explore

Read more about Australasian Dance Collective and Matrix on Australasian Dance Collective's [Website](#)

Engage

Book a workshop with one or more of our Australasian Dance Collective Dancers to build on your students dance practice. Send an email to hello@australasiantdancecollective.com to book or find out more information.

Research

Discover more about the companies previous collaborations with some of Chinas leading contemporary dance companies. Head over to the [Australasian Dance Collective website](#).

Write

Have your students develop a question prior to coming to view the performance. Ask them to consider what they are most curious or excited about seeing. Students should discuss the answer to their question following watching the performance, and how their initial thoughts or feelings about the work changed after experiencing it.

Revise

Read through the definitions below to familiarise yourself with the key dance terms used in this resource and in the dance classroom.

Elements of Dance: Four elements that form the basis of any dance work: Space, Time, Dynamics and Relationships.

- Choreographic Devices: The tools a choreographer selects and uses to communicate ideas:
 - Abstraction
 - Sequence
 - Repetition
 - Transition
 - Contrast
 - Variation
 - Canon
- Movement Qualities: Refers to how the movement is performed: percussive, collapsing, sustained, swinging, vibratory and suspended.
- Motif: A reoccurring movement or sequence of movement in a dance work that clearly conveys a theme or mood.
- Production Elements: Non movement components such as props, lighting, costumes, sound and makeup in a dance performance.

03 About Australasian Dance Collective



[About the Company](#)

[About the Dancers](#)

[Artistic Director: Amy Hollingsworth](#)

04 About Matrix

Matrix (noun): a cultural, social or political environment or context in which something develops.

Two companies, two cultures and two creative philosophies collide to create a spell-binding night of thought-provoking, visually-arresting dance virtuosity.

Australasian Dance Collective collaborates with one of China's leading contemporary dance companies - Beijing Dance/LDTX - to present an exhilarating double bill, Matrix.

The result of a five-week creative development in China, the production born out of its own matrix, will feature brand new works by two of Australasia's leading female choreographers - multi award-winning Australian choreographer, **Stephanie Lake**, and the highly-acclaimed Chinese choreographer, **MA Bo**.

Australasian Dance Collective's six ensemble members will be joined on stage by the 14-strong company of LDTX, filling the QPAC Playhouse with a wildly ambitious and dazzling display of contemporary dance.



04 About Matrix

Choreographer of Auto Cannibal
Stephanie Lake



Stephanie Lake is a multi award-winning choreographer, dancer and director of Stephanie Lake Company based in Melbourne. Stephanie's acclaimed works including Colossus, Pile of Bones, Skeleton Tree, DUAL and Aorta tour widely and have been presented in France, Belgium, Dublin, Hong Kong, Denmark, Scotland, Luxembourg, Singapore and New Zealand as well as across Australia. Stephanie has created works for many leading companies including Sydney Dance Company, Chunky Move, New Zealand Dance Company, Queensland Ballet, Frontier Danceland (Singapore), Tasdance, Dancenorth and Australasian Dance Collective. Stephanie is the current recipient of the Australia Council Fellowship for Dance and previously the prestigious Sidney Myer and Dame Peggy Van Praagh Fellowships. Stephanie collaborates across theatre, film, music video and visual art and has directed several large-scale works for over 1000 participants.

About Auto Cannibal

When creating new dance works I'm conscious of the regurgitation of past choreographic ideas. I'm sometimes afraid that I'm repeating myself or cannibalising my own work. But the fact is that no idea - in art, technology or ideology - is born in a vacuum.

We are all a product of our influences and experiences. Ideas are also part of a life cycle - they are born, they thrive, they degrade and deteriorate and become the fertiliser for

the next batch of ideas. Our modern world is obsessed with newness and consumption but this work is an ode to re-using, re-purposing, re-invigorating.

In AutoCannibal we embrace the palimpsests of previous choreographies and see them grow and evolve through the bodies of these extraordinary dancers, meeting from across the world.

04 About Matrix

Choreographer of Encircling Voyage

MA Bo

MA Bo was born in Mizhi, Shanxi province, and is among one of most passionate female choreographers in China. From 1987 to 1991, she studied at Beijing Dance Academy and stayed on as a teacher after graduation. MA joined Guangdong Modern Dance Company in 1993, and was with Beijing Modern Dance Company from 1999. MA became one of founding members of BeijingDance/LDTX in 2005.

MA collaborates with her husband LI Han-zhong in numerous classic creative projects such as: All River Red, Cold Arrow - Game of Go (Weiqi), Faded Monologue, Sorrowful Songs, Between Line, Speeding, Enigma.

About Encircling Voyage

When we arrive to this world
We set off voyage which will be encircling
Promise that we will be back for sure
Back to the origin
Cries that are resonant and melodious
Vowing the weight of vita
Life, to return
Like a landscape that is incredibly attractive to us...



05 The Creative Process

Choreographer of Auto Cannibal

Stephanie Lake

The dancers began the development of this work with long (30 minute) sessions of improvisation led by Stephanie that began as broad demonstrations of movement which became more refined as Stephanie saw elements of movement that interested her. The dancers recount one session on the first day where Steph improvised and they followed along behind her. They were then sent off to create shorter and more revised versions of the movement experienced from their memory. Then in two groups, the dancers came back together to create two big phrases of movement from everyone's improvisations. This then became the two base phrases for the beginning of the work.

Improvisations completed within the first few days of the creative development informed the 'water' section of the work. In this section, the dancers walk forwards and backwards at different speeds and with a variety of movement qualities that mimic water. The dancers also played a game to manipulate one another as they entered and exited the space. This improvisation formed the middle section of the work which was later named 'Lego' as the pieces of movements clicked together one by one.

Another task completed required each dancer to develop solo material that riffed on a previous improvisation completed. Dancers were asked to create their movement as if it were a dream and they were recounting it. Stephanie then trialed a variety of solos together as short duos which then became the basis for the final section of the work.

Additional improvisations completed include instructions that encouraged them to travel in a variety of ways, consider textures on their bodies, move through small spaces and enact a video game scenario. The dancers also enjoyed combining their individual solos with one another to form interesting and new duets.

When speaking to Steph later on in the creative development process, she revealed that she knew the sections and their order very early on in the process and had an idea of how the work would be structured by the third day of the development. The dancers state how interesting it was to only find out what the work was about later on in the creative process. It was not until they read the program notes after their first performance in China that they completely understood the process they were led through and found this an exciting and new way to learn a work.



05 The Creative Process

Choreographer of Encircling Voyage

MA Bo

Upon arrival to Beijing, a large section of Encircling Voyage had been choreographed by MA Bo so the dancers spent time learning the existing repertoire and engaging with simple movement tasks. Dancers learnt the repertoire in the first four days of creative development and experimented with transitions and new pathways of movement while rehearsing to ultimately alter and enhance the movement.

At the end of day one, company dancer Richard Cilli was given a creative task to develop a solo. This task required him to 'create movement where you are always off-balance, you try to stand upright but you quickly fall off-balance again. The movement can be quite powerful'. Adding in a quality of traveling, Richard's creative development was then played with as both a solo and a duet with added in contact between dancers.

The dancers described the creative process for this work as an involvement in many separate sections that all included large amounts of detail and strong intention throughout all movement.

The dancers also worked from written stimulus, MA Bo's personal experiences, feelings, character representations and the symbolism of life from young to old. Images and intentions for each section of the work were provided verbally to assist the dancers with the development of their movement also.



06 Production Elements

Production elements used within Matrix have been carefully selected to enhance the choreographic intent of the works.

MA Bo has primarily used props in her work including:

- Multiple low benches covered in a reflective surface that are moved continually throughout the piece for dancers to move on and react to
- A book from which a poem is read twice throughout the performance work
- White powder blown from the book following the final reading
- White paint throughout the dancers hair and on their clothes

Stephanie Lake has also utilised production elements such as:

- A piece of music composed specifically for the work
 - Painted white lines along the dancers bodies
 - Confetti falling across the stage in the final scene of the work
- **Ask your students to consider what the combination of these exact production elements might represent or intend to convey in a dance work and why they think this, providing examples of their interpretation to justify their answers.**
 - **Allow students to brainstorm and discuss with a peer and then the whole class how production elements can enhance their own and others choreography.**
 - **After reading the choreographic intent of the works, have students consider how they would design the production elements of this work as the production coordinator of the work. Students may choose to keep the elements listed above or add and change elements. Ensure they explain why they have made the decisions they have.**

Production Elements	Student Notes
Props	
Set Design	
Costumes	
Lighting	
Music/Sound	
Performance Space	

07 Choreographic tasks

These choreographic tasks have been designed to encourage your students to explore a variety of movement development techniques utilised when creating Matrix through the making strand, that will ultimately enhance their creative practice.

All tasks make strong connections to the Australian Curriculum Dance Aims of:

- body awareness and technical and expressive skills to communicate through movement confidently, creatively and intelligently
- choreographic and performance skills and appreciation of their own and others' dances
- aesthetic, artistic and cultural understanding of dance in past and contemporary contexts as choreographers, performers and audiences
- respect for and knowledge of the diverse purposes, traditions, histories and cultures of dance by making and responding as active participants and informed audiences

The following creative tasks use the below 21st Century Skills:

- Critical thinking
- Creative thinking
- Communication
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Personal and social skills



07 Choreographic tasks

Auto Cannibal

Task A: IMAGINARY PATHWAYS

This task uses a series of imagery-based improvisations to explore new movement pathways and take dancers out of their usual comfort zones. This exercise can be used for large group work and solo work.

Part 1: CIRCLES: Students will travel from one side of the room to the other creating circular pathways with their body. They can choose to isolate a single body part or a variety of alternating body parts. Encourage your students to consider the use of the four elements of dance; space, time, relationships and dynamics, exploring levels, pathways, movement qualities, size and shape of the circles created. Students are to aim to explore how they can connect one circular movement to another through their body seamlessly. Students repeat this exercise a number of times to allow the students to further explore their improvisation. Students may observe one another completing this activity if comfortable. Junior students may complete this task at the same time as their peers in small groups, while senior students can complete in pairs, taking time to watch one another.

Part 2: PERCUSSIVE: Similar to Part 1 (Circles), students will travel from one area of space to another, this time moving body parts with a sharp, accented and percussive movement quality. This exercise requires students to tense and release all parts of their body. Providing students with imagery such as being poked with a stick will stimulate this quality. Again, encourage students use of the elements of dance through levels, tempos, size and a variety of movement shapes.

Part 3: WATER: A continuation from the previous two tasks, Water requires students to improvise and travel through the dance space as if their body is made out of water. To provoke this, explain to students that their body contains no bones and that they should explore a variety of qualities within their movement such as trickling water, dripping water, gushing water, and water falling from a waterfall. Students should be encouraged to again use the elements of dance to enhance their improvisation.

Repeat these exercises a number of times to allow the students to further explore their improvisations and movement generation styles, and allow them to observe how others approach the same task. Using a variety of music and sound styles and rhythms will influence how they approach improvisation. Also consider facilitating each activity at a base level, and use the elements of dance, movement qualities and choreographic devices to build upon and enhance students improvisation results.

Part 4: CONSTRUCTING YOUR IMAGINARY PATHWAYS: Divide the room into North, South, East and West and make this clear to students through instruction or signs. Choosing one of the above improvisation tasks to move through, have your students start close together in one area of the room. Call out directions for your students to move towards as a group, using the chosen improvisation pathway. Ensure your students stay close together and negotiate the space collectively. To add an additional level of difficulty, divide your space further into NE, NW, SE and SW add use level and speed as instructions also.

For example:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| • STARTING AT SOUTH | • Circles to East |
| • Water to North | • Low circles to West |
| • Water to South East | • High circles to North |
| • Percussive to West | • Fast circles to South |
| • Water to South East | • Slow water to West |

Repeating this pattern of movement several times will allow students to devise motifs and form a phrase of movement.

07 Choreographic tasks

Auto Cannibal

Task B: TRAIL MIX

This task uses improvisational exercises to generate movement through the use of memory and observation. This activity can be used to create solo and group phrases.

Part 1: VIDEO GAME: In this exercise, students use the teacher provided stimulus or their own imaginations to create a landscape to move through. This may include imaginary doors, holes in the floor, obstacles to jump over or duck under, sticky surfaces, pools of water, floors crumbling underneath them and vines to wind through. Moving from one side of the room to the other, students will enter this video game landscape all together or in small groups. After following teacher instructions students may break into smaller groups and complete this task in their own space without teacher direction. Students of a senior level may enter the space individually and improvise for a minimum of 30 seconds before exiting again. Encourage students to observe one another and document the movements they notice either visually, physically or in written form.

Part 2: MEMORY RECALL: All students now work individually to recall movement explorations they created or observed. Students select one phrase or motif they would like to explore further and develop 2-4 further motifs or phrases that build on this.

Part 3: THE TRAIL MIX: Working in small groups, students share their chosen explorations and new movement phrases with one another. Structuring these together, students collaborate to create a new movement phrase and perform for one another to highlight the variety of choreographic movements, processes and structuring undertaken in the class.

Task C: LEGO

This task requires students to improvise through manipulation, using an action and reaction technique. This activity can be used to make duets, trio and larger group contact work.

Part 1: EXPLORATION: Students find a partner and choose one person to be Person A and the other to be Person B. Person A starts by creating an interesting static shape with their body. Person B then enters the space and disrupts Person A's shape by manipulating their body into a new shape, position or movement. Person A should allow this to happen and be open to moving in any new direction, level or position that they are directed to. Person B's manipulation finds a natural end point at which time both Person A and B will freeze in their positions. Person A will then extract themselves from the new shape without disturbing Person B and step away from the dance space. This process can then either be continued between person A and B or through a whole class or small group activity in which new people continually enter the space, manipulate the other dancer and then freeze, waiting to be manipulated again.

Part 2: LEGO BUILDING: Students repeat part 1, however following each 'Lego' manipulation, students will repeat their given manipulation to form a movement sequence of morphing shapes. Students are to start playing with the speed of each manipulation and consider more interesting ways of entering and extracting themselves from the space and their shape. Students should use the elements of dance, movement qualities and choreographic devices to build this phrase into a dance work. Students should also explore the possibility of more than one person entering and manipulating one shape. This will result in two shapes left in the space, with which one or more people can then enter and create a larger 'Lego' manipulation.

07 Choreographic tasks

Encircling Voyage

Task D: FALLING/FLOATING

This task allows students to choreograph from a written stimulus by exploring themes surrounding Encircling Voyage.

Part 1: RELATING TO THE CONTEXT: Working individually, students are to note the key words that stand out to them when researching the context of Encircling Voyage (Australasian Dance Collective provided resources or website suggestions). Students then link similar words, images, actions and emotions that come to mind when exploring their chosen words from the text. Two examples used in the creation of Encircling Voyage are FLOATING and FALLING. Students may find it easier to organize their ideas into a graphic organizer such as a frayer model or a mind map. Students then develop one or more motifs from their word exploration that represent and exemplify their linked words, images, actions or emotions.

Part 2: FROM TEXT TO BODY: Using the stimuli created in part 1, students structure their motifs into a movement sequence that represents or explores an aspect of the work Encircling Voyage.

Students should be encouraged to layer their ideas and not settle for their first exploration. Ask them to consider how they can transfer their ideas to different parts of the body? Can they use expressive skills such as projection, focus, facial expressions and musicality to enhance their ideas? What is the pathway of their movement and can they change this?

Students should also take time to consider why they are completing that particular exploration they have selected and what else they can do to make that clear to an audience member. This could be completed through a verbal think, pair, share discussion with a partner in the class or written through a choreographic journal or reflection.

Additionally, students may write their own choreographic intent and then share it with the class prior to or following the performance of their movement.



07 Choreographic tasks

Encircling Voyage

Task E: DUETS IN CONFINED SPACES

This task is an extension of Task D and requires the students to work with a partner and collaborate to negotiate space in order to build a duet.

Part 1: SHOW N TELL: Students will begin by performing their individual solos created in Task D to a partner.

Part 2: CONFINING THE SPACE: Create a small square on the floor (approximately 2x2 metres) using tape or small objects in each corner. Each dancer is to stand in the square and practice their solo movements slowly, negotiating the space with their partner.

***Note:** Ensure students complete this task carefully and notice when completing movement becomes difficult, something similar happens at the same time, or when a level or dynamic change occurs.*

Students working in the new Senior Dance Syllabus may either record this process or have an observer take notes of choreographic problems, solutions to these problems and an evaluation of the solutions success to practise for their evaluative response in Unit 2s project work.

Part 3: FROM SOLO TO DUET: Starting slowly from the beginning, the students can begin to collaborate with their partner, making suggestions of how they will negotiate the space. Students should take note of difficult moments to work out and those beautiful coincidences where something similar happens. Encourage students to move around the square, using all the space provided, to intertwine around and through each other, finding opportunities to react off their partners movement.

Consider where the students might find moments of contact, unison and change of direction. Make it clear to your students that their original phrase will be compromised and they will have to adapt to form this duet. Again, students may use an outside observer to notice, record and notate these moments for the students collaborating.

Part 4: FINDING THE NARRATIVE: Once the duet is created, ask your students to work with their partner to discuss and interpret what the possible relationship might be within the duet. Ask students to consider; do the movements bring a story to mind? Is there a character coming to life? Each duet will create an intention. Once this is discussed and unpacked, allow your students to explore the duet further and find ways to develop this layer through: **eye contact, touch, movement qualities, textures, expression, sound, dynamics, tempos, repetition, space, relationships and choreographic devices** are some ideas on how students might assist their story telling.

Alternatively or additionally, students may be given a secret intention by the teacher and will need to model or re-model and manipulate their duets to convey this meaning. Students can then perform for one another and have the audience guess the intention of their duets.

09 Repertoire Notes

Stephanie Lake, Auto Cannibal

Dancers to start stage left facing stage right:

1. Walking from stage right to stage left in a robotic style, step right foot, left foot then right foot on counts '1,2,3' and ball change on 'and 4.' Then repeat starting with left foot first. Arms are contained and face is to the front. This is repeated for 2 counts of 8.
2. Dancers then break off in any direction stepping long strides, leaning back with exaggerated relaxed swinging arms, starting with right foot first for 1 count of 8, stepping on each count.
3. Turn body to face down stage right corner and side step towards up stage right corner in a demi plié. Stepping out to the side with right foot and in together with left. Arms open and close like butterfly wings with each step. Head is looking over left shoulder. Step out, together, out, together for first 4 counts. Head changes to right shoulder and repeat steps for another 4 counts. Then repeat for another count of 8 and change directions on count 1 and count 5.
4. Turn body to face the front and jump on the spot in parallel landing on each count for 1 count of 8. Hands are held in front of face as if you are holding a large burger, and mouth is open as wide as possible.
5. Continue jumping for 1 more count of 8 however start to crumble to a lower level. Jumps become smaller and arms begin to drop. This is improvised.



10 Responding tasks

These tasks aim to develop students ability to analyse, interpret and evaluate dance works through the responding strand. Throughout these activities, students will be able to unpack and explore Matrix through the elements of dance, choreographic devices, movement qualities, motifs and production elements used by MA Bo and Stephanie Lake.

Task A: Write: Choreographic Intent

- Students begin this task by reading both of the choreographic intents for the works in Matrix.
- From here they will then select one intent that resonates with them and note all of the key words, ideas and imagery that the intent evokes for them.
- Students then choose their top 5 ideas, words or imagery to write on individual pieces of paper and rearrange these into a random order.
- Following this, students then create a series of movements or motifs from their inspiration drawn from the choreographic intents, in the structure created from chance.
- Once created, other students can then move around the space and collect and swap words with one another to build and adapt their choreographic sequence to include a variety of stimuli.
- Students will then write a formal intent for their choreographic work and note the similarities and differences between the original intent and their new works.

Task B: Write: Review

- Following students completing the choreographic and performance tasks with in these notes, teachers should have students perform for one another in two groups.
- Students in the audience should find movements or dance concepts to analyse, interpret and evaluate the work performed in front of them as a formal review. Students may use the table n the following page to complete this.
- Following the writing of their work, students will then swap and share their re views for one another to read, edit and gain inspiration from.
- Additionally, students can also review Matrix after viewing the performance at QPAC in November and select movements, elements of dance, choreographic devices, movement qualities or production elements to analyse, interpret and evaluate.

Task C: Explore: Creative Concepts

- In her work Auto Cannibal, Stephanie Lake explores the influences of previous choreography and how movement evolves on different dancers bodies.
- After completing the choreographic and performance tasks within these notes, students will then watch one another perform and analyse (describe) the differences and similarities between dancers interpretations of movement and its quality. Students should notice how each dancer manipulates dance components to portray an intent, what the result of this is and the effectiveness of a variety of interpretations.
- Ask students to consider what else they notice. What key words would they use to describe the variety of movements? Would the movements look different drawn in visual form? Spoken in sound? What other ways can students express a variety of movements and how does this change the intention of the movement?
- Students can also complete a reverse chronology research task on MA Bo or Stephanie Lake to discover the influences on their choreography to ultimately enhance the depth of their knowledge of Matrix and its choreographers.

10 Responding tasks

Students can use the below table to analyse, interpret and evaluate a variety of dance concepts and skills when viewing Matrix at QPAC in November.

	Analysis	Interpretation	Evaluation
Key motifs			
Elements of dance			
Movement qualities			
Choreographic devices			
Production elements			

11 Safe dance practices

In order to ensure students are comfortable, confident and producing their best possible creative work in the classroom, a safe dance environment is crucial. Teachers can play a fundamental role in ensuring this occurs for their students.

If you would like to learn more about safe dance practices in your classroom, you can book a school workshop with our Australasian Dance Collective dancers.

Techniques to promote improvisation and contact duo work:

- Encourage students to stand in a circle around the room, facing outwards with all mirrors covered, while the teacher stands in the middle of the circle. Students can leave their eyes open and move freely while the teacher gives directions for movement. For beginners to improvisation, encourage students to create angles and rounded shapes and write words with different parts of their bodies. Allow students the time to either write down or visually record the movement they create.
- Set up a buddy system where students can choreograph and improvise freely and then discuss ideas with their buddy before presenting to the class or the teacher. This allows them to build confidence in their ideas and refine their work prior to being watched by the class.
- Additionally, you can read out directions or lines of movement for students to interpret through improvisation. Students can work in pairs and draw one another dancing and furthermore interpret one another's drawings into further choreography.
- Have students build a rapport with their contact duo partner to ensure they are comfortable exploring movement together. This can be achieved through ice breaker activities and trust exercises over a period of time.

Tips from the Australasian Dance Collective Company Dancers:

- Ensure students have enough space to practice movements full out without being afraid of injuring other dancers, or themselves.
- Allow them the chance to learn, mark and perform in small groups, not just split groups at the end of the class, otherwise alter the choreography to suit the space.
- Ensure students are aware of the floor and surfaces they are dancing on and whether bare feet or socks are best.
- Encourage students to be responsible for their own sweat and any blood during class and cleaning it appropriately to ensure the safety and consideration of the other dancers in the class.
- Make sure students are aware of the ceiling height for jumps and lifts, as well as any poles that may be in the dance studio.
- Teachers should always emphasise the importance of basic parallel position, knees tracking over the second toe in a plie and correct ankle/pelvis/ribs/shoulder/head alignment.

Ultimately, the students are collectively responsible for everyone's safety in the room.

– Isabella Hood

Australasian
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