

Owen Allen¹, David McMicken²

¹Atherton Family Physiotherapy, QLD; ²Tracks Dance Company, NT

This is not a discussion about the habitual embodiment that drives our organisations, professions, and communities down the highways that bypass the burden of disease and disability. This is restructuring. This is taking the exits off that highway. This is dance.

Although none of the original members are still in the group, the Grey Panthers of the Darwin TRACKS Company have been performing since 1988. They have often challenged the role of the senior in society, working with playwrights, choreographers, filmmakers, and other artists. As individuals, the Grey Panthers are driven by constant volunteerism; extra care for others; and making activities that are relevant and fun. Dance is seen as a tool in their arsenal of health, fitness, mental dexterity, socialisation, care and support, entertainment, and visibility.

TRACKS Company has also worked for 25 years with the Lajamanu elders near the Tanami Desert, south west of Katherine, observing the value of dance in the empowerment of elders in the community. Other dance companies with mature dancer programs have alluded to the empowerment that comes from 'creating a future for the older person' (Glen Murray, MADE in Tasmania, Inaugural DANscienCE Festival, Canberra, 2013).

The Grey Panthers will perform a 20 minute enquiry into their experience of Darwin and Northern Territory life. Given the health burden of remote Australians, and in the spirit of 'the message is in the media', the performance comes with an invitation to look at the development of dance and movement arts in rural Australia as having a significant contribution to the cultural change required for healthy community: physical and cognitive adaptability; emotional and social resilience; and social discourse.

And maybe something else will show up for you.

Presenters

Owen Allen is a physiotherapist of 34 years, practising mostly in rural Queensland in both private and public sectors. Between 1994 and 2009 Owen was involved with the rural health movement through Queensland and National committees and organisations. In 2008, Owen began looking at introducing creativity into his practice with older people, and facilitating local arts-in-community events. Through the work, Owen has found himself in a growing network of North Queensland regional dancers; and significant dance leaders as Liz Lea of Canberra Dance Theatre and DANscienCE Festival, Glen Murray of MADE (Tasmania), David McMicken, Tracks NT, Erica Rose Jeffrey (Dance for PD, Brisbane). Owen has begun an association with Art as Action, Boulder Colorado and as a creative consultant with Future Flash (Climate Change Education Program, Gainesville, Florida). Through these projects, Owen has developed an inclusive facilitatory approach to contemporary theatre dance as a practice. By 2016, he will be ready to take the program, The Art of Movement, to any rural community in Australia.

David McMicken is the Co-Artistic Director of the multi award winning Tracks Dance Company with Tim Newth. David's initial training in dance, theatre, literature and music (in Melbourne) helped him develop an interest in multi-art form early in his career. After a successful career as a performer and artistic director in several dance and performance companies in Tasmania and Victoria, he came to the Northern Territory in 1991. Employing his skills in the arts, education, and community cultural development, David has worked as dance development officer at Browns Mart Community Arts, and he steered the formation of Tracks Dance Company as a leading community based dance and performing arts company. This company works with community members of all ages and backgrounds. The company has a twenty-five year cultural development relationship with the remote Indigenous community of Lajamanu, and has run the Grey Panthers seniors dance troupe since its inception in 1988. David was made a Member (AM) in the general division of the Order of Australia in 2014.