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Branch Nebula

Branch Nebula (Lee Wilson and Mirabelle Wouters) is one of Australia's most adventurous companies pushing at the boundaries of performance. Working at the nexus between theatre, dance, sport and street-styles, BN takes audiences into the extreme creativity of urban landscapes, and immerses them in real time experiences. BN works with non-conventional performers to collaboratively devise work that defies categorization. We interrogate the audience experience and explore contemporary culture as a means of creating access and speaking to a broad audience. We work with street-style artists to create new visions for engaging with BMX, skating, parkour, tricking and contemporary dance.

branchnebula.com



Arts House

Arts House is where artists and audiences gather to find new frontiers in contemporary performance. Hyperlocal and intergalactic, Arts House's development and presentation programs create new live experiences across artforms. A key program of the City of Melbourne, Arts House drives major curatorial projects such as Dance Massive, BLEED and Refuge as well as presenting art in partnership with festivals in Melbourne and nationwide.

artshouse.com.au

ARTS HOUSE  CITY OF MELBOURNE

Photos: Heidrun Lohr. Cover photo: Tristan Still

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Melbourne International Arts Festival

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MELBOURNE International Arts FESTIVAL

2 → 20
October
2019

Branch Nebula

High Performance Packing Tape

Presented with Arts House

Wed 2—Sun 6 October
Meat Market

AD Audio Described Fri 4 October

This performance runs for one hour and 10 minutes with no interval.

This performance contains nudity, strobe lighting and smoke effects.

Please ensure all mobile phones are switched off or on silent.

Principal Public Partner

CREATIVE VICTORIA



Artistic Credits

Collaborating Artists

Lee Wilson
Mickie Quick
Mirabelle Wouters
Phil Downing
Antek Marciniiec
(consultant)

Producer

Harley Stumm
(Intimate Spectacle)

Branch Nebula (b. 1999)

High Performance Packing Tape, 2018

Live performance

Giant balloon, compressor, air hoses, trailer net, exercise balls, giant boxes, ball boxes, Gempac boxes, Alto boxes, small boxes, plastic chairs, jumbo elastic bands, 4m scaffolding pipes, 3m scaffolding pipes, swivel scaffolding clamps, ratchet straps, 4m slings, 3m black rope, high performance packing tape, gloves, flat large box, Gempac boxes, 40cm blush balloons, eucalyptus spray, bubble wrap suit, milk crate, 8m tape measure, high performance packing tape, smoke cartridge, jumbo elastic bands, PVC plastic pipe, high performance packing tape, rope, pulleys, box cutter, high performance packing tape, vacuum cleaner, mop.

What you see is what you get

Branch Nebula co-founder Lee Wilson and visual artist Mickie Quick were reminiscing about the old days.

They used to squat in the same suburb, and recalled a group of fellow squatters who had gathered so much discarded packing tape that they filled a room with it and used the resulting mass as a crash mat.

The notion had immediate appeal for Wilson. “I wanted to play with materials that were readily accessible and available around us every day. Rubber bands, cardboard, sticky tape... I really liked this idea of trying to find alternative things for suspending your body or making crash mats out of cardboard boxes or things like that.”

Wilson and Quick began driving around looking for materials in back alleys, second-hand shops and consumer warehouses like Bunnings and Officeworks. It was an experiment—there was no sense that a show would result—and Wilson says that the materials themselves led the process.

Once they had a room full of boxes, tape and other consumables, they began to play.

“It’s almost about a delight in doing the wrong thing,” says Wilson. “I’ve had a lot of training with safety because of my acrobatics history and I’m also an aerialist so I’ve had some really good mentors that have taught me about good rigging practice. It’s very liberating to break all those rules.”

After 20 hours they shot a rough video. It took a few months before Wilson’s Branch Nebula co-founder Mirabelle Wouters got around to watching it, but when she did, she loved it. “I was like, oh my god, this is fantastic,” she says. “It really sparked my imagination immediately. I had a really good feel for where it could go.”

Like all of Branch Nebula’s works, *High Performance Packing Tape* sits in the spaces between disciplines. It has the risk and immediacy of live art, the visceral curiosity of contemporary dance, even the discipline and rigour of circus.

“We’re actually quite anti-theatrical,” says Wilson. “We’re very anti representational kinds of performance. Any kind of fiction or narrative. We do that because we feel very strongly about our performance roots. We want to share with an audience that look, you don’t need that. We can make a very powerful and dramatic experience without it being fictional or having characters or story or all that stuff.”

With *High Performance Packing Tape*, what you see is what you get. Nevertheless, past audiences have discerned their own stories amid all the chaos that takes place—an office worker taking out his frustration in the supply room, for instance, or a parable about all the waste generated in the name of productivity.

“We want the audience to work,” says Wouters. “We don’t want to make anything clear about what they’re supposed to be thinking. We don’t want to steer people or direct people into what it’s supposed to be about. I really love that the work evokes different things for different people and that people read different things in it.” — **John Bailey**

John Bailey is a freelance writer based in Melbourne.

BIOGRAPHIES

Lee Wilson currently mainly works with Branch Nebula and has worked as a dramaturg on productions like Nick Power’s dance pieces *Cypher* and *Between Tiny Cities* and led workshops including Body of Ideas at Critical Path. In the past Wilson has performed in other’s work and occasionally as director. Some past collaborators include Nick Power, Roslyn Oades, Ahilan Ratnamohan, Shaun Parker, Shaun Gladwell, UTP, Kate Champion, Acrobat and Post Arrivalists.

Mickie Quick works in multifarious modes, often collaborative and interactive. Street art, graphic design, hijacking abandoned urban space for creative uses, prop-making, activism, performance installations, weddings, parties... anything. Quick co-founded various artist run initiatives including SquatSpace, Big Fag Press and The Rizzeria.

Mirabelle Wouters is a set, lighting and costume designer and Co-Artistic Director of Branch Nebula. Most recently Wouters designed costumes for Marrugeku’s *Le Dernier Appel*. She designed set and costumes for Urban Theatre Projects’ *Buried City*, *The Football Diaries* and *The Last Highway* and lights for Nick Power’s *Cypher*, Ahilan Ratnamohan’s *SDSI*, Theatre Kantaka’s *Club Singularity* and *The Bargain Garden* and *The Hosts: A Masquerade Of Improvising Automatons* by Wade Marynowsky.

Phil Downing started performing and recording music more than 20 years ago and was first engaged to produce soundtracks for theatre through experimentation with original musical inventions. He continues composing using various music recording/ editing tools, creating sounds from found objects or manipulation of surroundings and the natural environment. Highlights include *The Irresistible* (Side Pony Productions), *Winyanboga Yurringa* and *This Fella My Memory* (Moogahlin Performing Arts), *Plenty Serious Talk Talk*, *Stolen* and *Long Grass* (Vicky Van Hoot), *Murder* (Erth), *Posts in the Paddock* and *The Piper* (My Darling Patricia), *Artwork* and *STOP-GO* (Branch Nebula), *Falling* (Alice Osbourne/ Performance Space) and *The Fox and the Freedom Fighters* (Performance Space).

Antek Marciniiec is one of the most talented parkour/free running athletes and high-line experts in Australia. He has been teaching classes with the Australian Parkour Association and other groups for more than 10 years and is one of the current leading Instructors in Sydney. Marciniiec has performed with Opera Australia, in Shaun Parker’s *SPILL* (Art and About 2013) and Branch Nebula’s *Concrete* and *Bone Sessions* (Sydney Festival 2013) and in Chile for the Santiago a Mil festival (2014).

Harley Stumm has worked in performing arts producing since 1994 and with Branch Nebula since 2005. Stumm established the independent producing company Intimate Spectacle in 2012. In that role he has produced and toured artists including Branch Nebula, Nick Power, post, Vicki Van Hout, Cambodian Space Project, Sam Routledge, Erth, Team Mess and Lenine Bourke, to major festivals and venues nationally, regionally and internationally. Previously, he was Producer at Performing Lines 2005–11, managing the Mobile States contemporary touring program, and was Executive Producer and joint CEO at Urban Theatre Projects 1995–2003, with UTP winning the Sidney Myer Award in this period.

Commissioned by Performance Space for Liveworks 2018.

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High Performance Packing Tape is supported by City of Melbourne through Arts House.