

Natalie Weir's 'Seven Deadly Sins'



The following pack is designed to give teachers and students an exclusive insight into the creation and presentation of Expressions Dance Company's 2015 production of 'Seven Deadly Sins'.

To create the Teacher Resource Pack, we examined the 2010 Senior Dance Syllabus, paying particular attention to teacher and student needs for Appreciation and Choreography. We also sought to provide dance teachers and students with a unique perspective on the creation of the work, to further their understanding of choreographic and design processes and how this translates into performance.

We have also provided some example Appreciation and Choreography tasks, which could be used as stimulus for assessment tasks after viewing the performance.

EXCLUSIVE	Access to the creative team and their methods...
EXAMINE	Example assessment tasks...
EXTEND	Themes and ideas surrounding the work, and how these could be explored further...
EXPRESSIONS	Background information on Expressions Dance Company...

TEACHER RESOURCE PACK

CONTENTS

	Synopsis and information about Natalie Weir	3
EXCLUSIVE	Interview with Natalie Weir	4
	Storyboard	6
	Interviews with the dancers	9
	Interview with designer Bill Haycock	13
	Costume sketches, set design	14
EXAMINE	Example Appreciation Task 1	16
	Example Appreciation Task 2	16
	Example Appreciation Task 3	17
	Example Choreography Task 1	18
	Example Choreography Task 2	18
	Example Choreography Task 3 (Classroom task)	19
EXTEND	Extend, Explore, Connect and Engage	20
	History of EDC	21

We are very interested in the continual improvement of our Teacher Resource Packs. If you have any feedback on the pack, please feel free to us know. Contact Expressions Dance Company on education@expressionsdancecompany.org.au or 07 3257 4222.

Natalie Weir's 7 Deadly Sins

21 to 29 August, 2015

Playhouse, QPAC

Wrath . Greed . Sloth . Pride . Lust . Envy . Gluttony.

Plunge into a wicked tale of ancient sin unleashed on the modern world.

Internationally acclaimed choreographer, Natalie Weir, and the Expressions Dance Company ensemble of award-winning dancers take you on a journey through the seven deadly sins in this edgy, world-premiere production, spiced with villainous wit.

Spotlighting the inherent frailty and imperfections that exist in us all, *7 Deadly Sins* explores the age-old sinful nature of mankind retold through electrifying contemporary dance characterised by Natalie Weir's unique insights into the human condition.

Rich imagery, extravagant costumes and breathtaking movement will pack an emotional punch in this devilishly delicious adventure.

Presented by Expressions Dance Company and Queensland Performing Arts Centre

Choreography and Concept – Natalie Weir

Dancers – Expressions Dance Company

Designer – Bill Haycock

Lighting Design – David Walters

Composer – Darrin Verhagen



About Natalie Weir

Natalie is known internationally for her highly physical partner work, her organic movement style and her touching insight into human nature. On her journey with EDC as Artistic Director, Natalie continues to create work that balances artistic risk with accessibility and that speaks of humanity. Natalie Weir has created over 160 professional works in her 25+ year career. She was a founding member of Expressions Dance Company and was offered her first choreographic commission by Expression's artistic director, Maggi Sietsma at 18.

Natalie was resident choreographer for Queensland Ballet and Australian Ballet and has worked extensively throughout Australia, creating works for the country's other major classical and contemporary dance companies, including West Australian Ballet, Dancenorth and Australian Dance Theatre. Career highlights include creating *Petrushka* for Queensland Ballet and *Dark Lullaby* for the Australian Ballet.

Natalie has also created works for, or had her works performed by, international companies such as Houston Ballet, Singapore Dance Theatre, Hong Kong Ballet and American Ballet Theatre. Natalie's work has been recognised through Helpmann Awards for *where the heart is* (2011), Australian Dance Awards for *where the heart is* (2011) and *R&J* (2012). Her work *Steppenwolfe* for Houston Ballet received the prestigious *Choo San Goh Award* and her original version of *Turandot* for the Hong Kong Ballet received the 2004 Dance Award for Best New Work.

Natalie was appointed Artistic Director of EDC in January 2009, fulfilling her long-term dream to build an ensemble of dancers and contribute to the future of Australian Dance.

EXCLUSIVE

Introduction to 'Seven Deadly Sins' by EDC Artistic Director, Natalie Weir (Interview conducted on 7th July 2015 – Day 1 of development)

WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION TO CREATE THE WORK 'SEVEN DEADLY SINS'?

It was an idea that has been floating around for a while now. When looking for something for this company to do and good roles, it seemed like, I have seven dancers and there are seven sins. Each dancer could have something really special rather than one person is featured and everyone else is secondary. It would be nice to do something where everyone is strongly featured. I don't know where I found the idea, but it just seemed like good fodder.

WHICH DANCER IS PERFORMING WHICH SIN?

We did a creative development for 3-4 weeks at the beginning of the year and every dancer got a chance to play with every sin. This is different to what I have done before where I would normally just cast it because I know them so well. Each dancer got to play with every sin which was really interesting and then finally at the end of the month I cast it. Elise is 'Lust', Michelle is 'Wrath' due to her beautiful, fiery strength, Rebecca is 'Envy' and Cloudia is 'Sloth'. Sloth is a good one. Jack is 'Gluttony', Ben is 'Pride' and Daryl is 'Greed'. We have our extra dancer Thomas Greenfield who was in 'When time stops' playing the role of 'Man'. The seven sins and 'Man'.

IS THE WORK A NARRATIVE OR LITERAL PIECE?

It is more of a narrative piece but it is not telling a story. It really is a physicalisation of the sins. They start very elegantly dressed, and they all start in boxes. Thomas as 'Man' is sitting in his rather large box watching television and out of the television comes 'Sloth'.

This idea I am working with is a mannequin that also plays the role of 'Man' and the idea is that 'Man' leaves himself, as 'Sloth' comes out and becomes part of this unveiling of the boxes and the revealing of the sins, he opens all of the seven boxes. It is like they have been locked away in a crate for a long time. ***Is it like in his mind or in his psyche?*** Yes, that's what I am trying to poke at I think. In terms of him leaving himself, he unlocks all that and for whatever reason he is trying to come to terms with something and so he unlocks each of the boxes and unleashes the sins on himself or on the world. When they first appear they are quite ancient.

I was inspired by a particular artist that did ancient painting of the seven deadly sins, and from that, wanted the dancers to look similar. They are dressed in gold, they are in boxes that are gold. They are elegant, highly dramatized, and heavily clothed sins and they then shed their gold like they are shedding skin and become a truly physicalisation of the sin. So the work revolves around 'man' being affected by the sins and the sins being affected by each other. One of the sins has to be 'deadly' so at the moment it will be 'Wrath' that turns deadly and the storyline presents the 'man' in a place of violence where he has to make a choice and then he goes back into his box. The sins disappear like they have gone out into the modern world. There is a story but there is a lot of room for intense physicalisation. I am not looking at this work from a religious point of view, there is no judgment or anything, nothing like that, just that perhaps it's 'man' dealing with something that has happened in his life or doing something he regrets. Whether that has anything to do with lust or violence that remains to be seen. The dancers often take me to places I am not expecting and things can change.

It could also be looked upon like 'Man' is watching 'Game of Thrones' and just gets absorbed into the action or it is just happening in his mind or physically or spiritually, it's open to interpretation.

DESIGN WISE – WHAT WERE YOU HOPING TO ACHIEVE VISUALLY?

There is a huge box in the middle for ‘man’ and a large box for the TV which is sloth’s box which she comes out of. ‘Man’ then drags each box into the space, each sin has a box that was designed to suit their character or qualities of the sin.

Bill Haycock is the designer for the work and we discussed creating visually spectacular costumes however those costumes don’t allow for much movement. So we got the best of both worlds, it starts off very elegantly in gold and gold jewels and gold boxes and then they shed their costumes to reveal raw, organic black underwear.

MUSICALLY – WHAT DID YOU HEAR AS THE ACCOMPANIMENT FOR YOUR WORK?

We are not using live music for ‘Seven Deadly Sins’ but we went for an electronic composer. We wanted a big loud music score, so Darrin Verhagen who lives in Sydney who has done work in dance, theatre and films has created this big score that has been composed specifically for this work. It is a mix of percussion, voice, violins, sounds and breathing and this big, bold sound.

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE TO CREATE THIS WORK?

We had 4 weeks at the start of the year and today is day one of now taking that work we played with and start to put it all together. But also in that time, we have a score, a set, costumes are nearly finished, it’s now just up to me and the dancers. We have another 6-7 weeks before opening night to create a 1 hour work.

WAS IT DIFFICULT TO ASSIGN THE SINS TO EACH OF THE DANCERS?

For some it was, I saw Michelle being ‘Wrath’ because of her feet and strength. I wanted some sins to be an odd choice, not too predictable. Having Elise as ‘Lust’ maybe controversial but she has that maturity but she was really good as ‘Pride’ as well. Having Jack as ‘Gluttony’ is a bit odd because ‘they’ (the dancers) are all so fine and strong and fit so it seems like an odd choice for any of them to be ‘Gluttony’ but whoever I cast it would have been similar. People just immediately matched to their sin like Daryl and ‘Greed’ they just took off, there was no way he wasn’t going to be ‘Greed’. With Elise I was pretty set on as being ‘Lust’. With Ben he is a perfect ‘Pride’ with his stature and his posture. He has a Dorian Grey feel – obsessed with the picture and with his dark hair and beard he seemed perfect. Michelle’s feet and power I wanted to see as ‘Wrath’ and I liked the idea of seeing a woman as ‘Wrath’. Cloudia as ‘Sloth’ no one wanted to be ‘Sloth’ **that’s understandable it would be hard to dance as a sloth**, yes, but I worked it out that she gets carried around a lot and she can because she is so little. I always had this idea that this work started tiny and then got bigger so having her start in this tiny box and then she meets big, huge Thomas and as they are the first two that enter the space it is already a bit odd. She sort of gets carried around and gets swung around like she is nothing. She was much happier with that after we investigated it a bit further. They do kind of cast themselves.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE AUDIENCE WILL ENJOY ABOUT THE WORK?

Everything I hope. (laughs) Physically I would really like to push it to a new place for us as a company. There will be some humour in it especially with Gluttony and Pride. I think the men will bring some humour to it. The woman are a bit more serious. I think it will be very beautiful. I hope there will be a journey that people can relate to as the sins are amongst us and are everywhere. I am choosing to place a magnifying glass onto the sins and to ask the question ‘when does a sin become deadly?’ Some of the sins in today’s society are looked upon as a good thing like Pride. It is good to take Pride in yourself but when Pride is taken too far it becomes a self-obsession and then that is not too good. So there are lots of interesting bits in it and I think people will be able to relate to some of the sins. With the new sound it will also push it into a new escape, a whole different sound.





STORYBOARD – NATALIE WEIR’S – ‘Seven Deadly Sins’

7 Deadly Sins Story Board + Tech notes

Action	Music	Time	Tech notes
<p>Opening scene 1: Meet Man. Curtain goes up in darkness. We see the face of a man, (but it is a mannequin) as he sits on a chair watching a flickering TV. The man moves behind the dummy, and gradually stands up, and we feel as if he has left his body, as a mannequin remains on the seat behind.</p>	Spiritual, atmospheric	2 mins	<p>FLYS PRESET: House curtain in. Sloth is set in TV box USC and Thomas sits in front of/behind mannequin.</p> <p>FLY Q.1 – Curtain out. Thomas is revealed in box by light from television FX (+ special) Light haze continues throughout the show</p>
<p>Scene 2: Sloth and Man The man slides the box behind the TV out, and Sloth is revealed inside it. (Pandora’s box has been opened) (She is like a small child that he is quite protective of) He brings the box to the floor, and Sloth and man do a duet, her hanging of him in different contortions. She is needy, like a child. She returns to the box, and he sits on it.</p>	Breathing music, starts really gentle then builds to more of a panting. Breathing seems to have its own natural momentum that builds.	4 mins	<p>Mannequin is left illuminated by flickering glow of TV (permanently mounted LED FX on floor of box . Dim and shadowy environ.</p> <p>Colour palette: dim gold. As “Sloth” comes to life.</p>
<p>Scene 3: Greed and Man The Man pulls Greed box from behind curtain and moves it forward. The Man pulls some of the gold material out of the box. Greed stands up on edges of box-revealing his gold costume and cloak. The Man takes his gold jewelry and his cloak. Greed dances a solo. Greed takes the gold back of The Man, and pushes the box to the side,</p>	<p>Transition music for box to be pushed forward.</p> <p>Then into Greed music, like stacking something, hoarding something.</p>	<p>2 mins</p> <p>3 mins</p>	<p>This internally illuminated box has wheels + false bottom for batteries + RC4 dimmer etc. We see it coming from a distance through back cloth. Illuminated tangle (LED fibre + battery + switch – dancer operated)</p> <p>Brassy yellow lighting – big and bold state –</p>

<p>Scene 4: Gluttony Gluttony box is pushed forward by Man. Gluttony is revealed – lying in the box as if it is a pig trough. He comes out of box.</p>	<p>Transition music</p> <p>Gluttony music- big, expansive, talking space</p>	<p>1 min</p> <p>3 mins</p>	<p>Colour palette: mustard olive.</p>
<p>Scene 5: Gluttony and Man The Man and Gluttony at pig trough</p>		2 mins	
<p>Scene 6: Sloth Sloth Solo</p>		2 mins	
<p>Scene 7: Sloth Quartet Greed, Gluttony fight over Sloth and Sloth’s box. She gets thrown around. The Man tries to stop them, starts to get angry. He finally pulls Sloth away, back to her own box.</p>	<p>Exciting music- using the breathing again- but more exciting- should sound like Sloth’s fear.</p>	2 mins	

<p>Scene 8: Lust Lust box is pushed forward, Lust is revealed, with her head pushed back in her box,</p>	<p>Transition music for box to come forward</p>	<p>30 secs 4 mins</p>	<p>Colour Palette: Deep Violet Botticelli painting (existing box)</p>
<p>Scene 9: Gluttony and Lust Sensual duet – The Man watches, wanting her, building to jealousy, then to anger.</p>	<p>Lust and Gluttony music joined, with voice, but building to a climax.</p>	<p>3 mins 30 secs</p>	
<p>Scene 10: Envy The man gets Envy box and pushes it between Lust and Gluttony. The Man stands on the box and lifts the front of the cage. Envy slithers out- breaking apart Gluttony and Lust. Envy slithers out of her cloak with long train, like a snakeskin, as she comes out she sheds the skin. (Greed picks it up and keeps it).</p>	<p>Transition Music Whispering music</p>	<p>30 secs 2 mins 30 secs</p>	<p>Colour palette is cyan</p>
<p>Scene 11: Envy and Man Envy slithers over man- trying to infect him.</p>	<p>Intense whispering</p>	<p>2 mins</p>	
<p>Scene 12: Pride Pride box appears, (everyone onstage goes to help push him forward) and is opened, revealing Pride surrounded by mirrors. Pride comes out, solo then and stands on boxes as if a lectern and dancers who are sins already group on the floor as if listening to him do a speech. He comes into space and walks over dancers, like they are a staircase.</p>	<p>Pride music</p>	<p>30 secs 3 mins</p>	<p>Colour palette is interplay of full spectrum.</p>
<p>Scene 13: Pride and Envy Pride goes to get back in his box, but Envy is there. They dance a duet, and end up back in box. During next section she pushes him out- he goes and finds Lusts box.</p>	<p>Violin music</p>	<p>3 mins</p>	
<p>Scene 14 : Pride and Greed Greed attacks Pride in Lusts box, and removes him from it.</p>		<p>2 mins</p>	
<p>Scene 15: 3 Male sins Gluttony has stood on the podium in 1st place, Pride tries to remove him from it. Gluttony and Pride, into big male section. Pride and Gluttony have an altercation, Greed gets involved. Anger builds. Man pulls them apart.</p>	<p>Something like the wrath music – should be exciting.</p>	<p>3 mins</p>	

<p>Scene 16: Wrath Man angrily brings in Wrath box. Wrath is in box with stylized flames at base, smoke blown by small fans, and shards of mirror at bottom front of box.</p> <p>She comes out, solo into duet with the Man, her urging his anger on. (Need to leave her box close to gold curtain because of 240V LX tail.)</p>	<p>Transition as bring box forward, and music like a roaring fire, loud industrial noise.</p> <p>Wrath solo music – not as big a sound as the wrath music- but similar ?</p>	<p>30 secs</p> <p>4 mins</p>	<p>Fire box on wheels has LX tail: 240V for fans and small smoke machine + Dimmed circuit is for uplights.</p> <p>Possibly shake the back curtain to get moving effect? (Does cable need to detach from box at any stage??)</p> <p>Colour Palette: Deep amber Use of layered side light. Boost Haze??</p>
<p>Scene 17: Group Wrath Group scene- wrath infecting everyone</p>	<p>Music from previous scene explodes</p>	<p>2 mins</p>	
<p>Scene 18: The Man with Wrath and Lust The Man starts lustfully after Lust, with Wrath urging him on.</p>	<p>Wrath and Lust- like a domestic violence scene</p>	<p>2 mins</p>	
<p>Scene 19: Brawl All sins come in and big build. Lust and Man get more violent, and she is accidentally knocked to floor.</p>	<p>Bar room brawl</p>	<p>1 mins 30 secs</p>	
<p>Scene 20: Lust injured Lust is injured and very human</p>	<p>Single instrument, sad, melodic</p>	<p>2 mins</p>	
<p>Scene 21: Sins in Gold All sins come around The Man-moment of choice- they have redressed themselves, standing around him in Gold. The Sins all float away, taking their boxes.</p>	<p>Emotional climax of the work- piano music</p>	<p>2 mins</p>	
<p>Scene 22: Man Solo Man comes to terms with all he has encountered, the Man moves back to his box. False ending.</p>		<p>2 mins</p>	
			<p>TV FX in box again. Build in box as sins enter – LED?</p> <p>Fly Q 2 – Fly black sequin curtain up enough for dancers to enter under box USC</p> <p>Fly Q 3 – Black sequin curtain out (to top of box??) Rear stage revealed in back lit smoke (5KF + smoke machine??)</p> <p>Fly Q 4 – Black sequin curtain in</p>

Interviews with the EDC Dancers about 'Seven Deadly Sins'



Elise May (Lust)

What have you enjoyed about the creation of this work?

The creation of Seven Deadly Sins has been very playful and collaborative. I really enjoyed our initial creative development period where we were able to spend time researching the historical contexts, myths and stories surrounding the concept of the seven deadly sins and then spend time individually working on each of the

sins to get a feel of how the sins might physically manifest in the form of gesture, posture, stance and movement. Also playing with how each of the sins might encounter other sins was really interesting because it allowed us to discover even more information and detail throughout the process.



The composer of the sound score Darrin Verhagen has worked with us in the studio to create a unique sound score for the work. This has been an absolute delight, and I feel completely inspired by the music, I believe it sits perfectly with the movement and adds so much quality and atmosphere to the work. It feels wonderful to dance to a specifically commissioned score, a real luxury for any dancer.

Working with Natalie as she has shaped all of our tasks and movement responses into a cohesive work has been really amazing. She has taken those really interesting encounters that occurred during our experimentation in the creative developments and developed them further, creating solos, duets, trios quartets and group work and she has found a way to thread them together sequentially into a form which has real intrigue and narrative interest. I have really enjoyed the process of collaborating with Natalie to create the movement together, and as a result I feel a real ownership or sense of physical connection to the outcome and I have also felt very comfortable and confident in finding my own personal pathways in the movement as we prepare for the performance season.

What will audiences enjoy about this work?

I hope that audiences will really connect with the unique physicality of each of the dancers in this production. We each have very unique movement vocabularies which I think will be really engaging. The narrative although quite simple, should be something that the audience can relate to as the Seven Deadly Sins ideas have been referenced many times in popular culture and continue to be of interest even in our modern world as they continue to make social comment on the nature of our human identity. I really think that the combination of set, lighting, staging, music and movement will culminate in a very special theatrical experience.



Jack Ziesing (Gluttony)

What sin do you play?

I play the sin of gluttony.

Was it difficult creating movement for your sin?

We began the initial creation process with a week of investigating each sin

individually. Each day we would draw another sin out of a hat and take the day to research the sin, gather information and images and create movement based on what we found or what inspired us. Initially I found the sin of gluttony quite straight forward in terms of movement inspiration. I experimented with ideas of digestion, expulsion, chewing, tasting etc. It seemed most interesting to me to portray gluttony in a way that brought strong connotations to the senses and in a vulgar way.



When we began our second development period, I reviewed the original material and found it to be too obvious and stoic. I thought that if I was an audience member watching that solo, I would've wanted something more investigative than what initially comes to mind when I think of gluttony. I went back to my research and picked out certain words that stood out to me with strong imagery. From there it was clear that the majority of the words related to animals and hunting. I liked this idea of gluttony being some kind of vicious animal, on the hunt for its prey.

What have you enjoyed about the creation of this work?

I have enjoyed the commitment to investigation within the creative process of 7 Deadly Sins. It's been a great opportunity to create, spend time away from that creation and then come back to refine and respond differently, building on the information previously gathered.

What will audiences enjoy about this work?

I think 7 Deadly Sins is going to be a visual spectacle that audiences will respond to and Darren Verhagen's music is a huge driver of the feeling and energy throughout the work.

Do any of the sins interact or are you quite individual?

Something that interested Natalie from the beginning of the process was how the different sins would engage with each in different settings. How does the feeling of a single sin reverberate throughout a group of bodies or sins? What kind of conflict occurs when a sin and a pure entity come into contact? Where do the lines between certain sins begin to blur and become one? From these kinds of questions, Natalie has created many duos, trios, quartets and group sections that explore these ideas.

Do costumes, props or set pieces help to establish who your character/sin is? If so, how?

Costumes and sets play a large part in 7 Deadly Sins. At this point in the process, these elements are definitely lent on to emphasise each of the characters but ultimately I think that the movement and music of each sin are the strongest foundations that establish the sins.

How long did it take to develop the movement for your sin and the overall work?

At this point, gluttony has taken 6 weeks to create physically with a lot of thinking room in there too. We are still developing and changing the characters arc throughout the work. Same for the overall show, about six weeks with a lot of extra thinking time and conversations on top of that.

Michelle Barnett – Wrath

What sin do you play? I am Wrath.



Was it difficult creating movement for your sin?

Creating movement for wrath has definitely been a good challenge! There are 2 extreme ends to the sin wrath; I think it is very important to portray both of them in their true form. You cannot reach absolute wrath without the beginning of something, almost more dangerous, boiling away inside of someone's mind & body. The movement therefore consists of both minimal & large movement to convey the result of both internal & external wrath. It is challenging to have a balance of each so that wrath reads clear to the audience.

What will audiences enjoy about this work?

I think each individual will take something different from the work. We are all human. Each sin is in each human to a certain degree. Therefore I believe it is relatable to everyone. The movement is both beautiful & ugly. Athletic & soft. The music is incredible. Dark & grungy which is something very different to previous works. Amazing extravagant costumes. Plus an exciting set. The show is gutsy which will get the adrenaline pumping both on the stage and in the seats!



Ben Chapman – Pride

What sin do you play?

I play Pride. My character is very egotistic and loves himself and also isn't afraid to use others for his own advantage, but when his pride is challenged he will become a manic presence so that he can be on top again.



What have you enjoyed about the creation of this work?

I have really enjoyed developing the language for my sin, but it did take a bit of trial and error but I eventually found a way that pride would move.

Do any of the sins interact or are you quite individual?

I actually interact with most of the sins. Almost all of my interactions are about others who are challenging my pride and knock me down which really angers me so I lash back at them to get back on top.

Do costumes, props or set pieces help to establish who your character/sin is? If so, how?

My box is probably the biggest thing that establishes my character. When I first enter as the whole thing is mirrored on the inside, which establishes the self-loving nature of him.



Daryl Brandwood – Greed

What connection do you have to the sins?

I think we all have a connection to greed as a society. Wealth and material goods may not lead to happiness but they sure do help!



What do you think the audience will enjoy about the work?

I hope audiences enjoy working out which sin is which, and see something unique in each dancer's portrayal of these incredible deadly sins.

Rebecca Hall – Envy

What sin do you play?

Envy.

Was it difficult creating movement for your sin?

Natalie gave me a concept of being a snake, this allowed for movement to come from the animalistic characteristics that they portray. Thinking of descriptive words helped me to find movement.

What have you enjoyed about the creation of this work?

I have enjoyed the energy in the room and the new level of creativity that has been able to be brought to the piece. I am inspired every day I go to work.

Do you have any kind of connection to any of the sins?

Yes, definitely I think we all have connections to the sins in one way or another. Envy really sat well with me in regards to feeling comfortable with creating movement to a sin.

What will audiences enjoy about this work?

The high octane energy. The incredible score of music. I think it is a feast for a viewer in regards to art and athleticism.

Do any of the sins interact or are you quite individual?

All the sins interact by the end of the work.

Do costumes, props or set pieces help to establish who your character/sin is? If so, how?

Yes, in particular for envy I enter from a caged box (snake box with holes). The cape/dress I wear definitely sets the tone for slithering into the space.

How long did it take to develop the movement for your sin and the overall work?

Approximately 4 weeks but we are still fine tuning.



Cloudia Elder (Sloth)

What sin are you

Sloth

What is difficult creating movement for your sin?

Natalie has wanted me to incorporate the sense of momentum throughout my floor work. Staying true to the momentum in phrases has been a challenge, I occasionally realise I am unintentionally forcing too much of the energy, which throws the flow of the momentum. Also, finding the line between being helpless and helpful. Particularly in partnering - my character manipulates others to carry her throughout the work. And finding the illusion to look easy as well as being in a difficult lift, is something that I'm still developing and understanding.

Do you have any kind of connection to any of the sins?

The work is still in the early stages of development, however so far my main connection is to Thomas, the only mortal in the work. Thomas's perception of me is as if I'm a helpless baby. So he often finds ways to look after me, he's my security. I'm often seen hanging off Thomas throughout the show, or catching rides with him.



Thomas Greenfield (Man)



When playing the role of 'Man' how do you interact with the sins?

I interact with all the sins, the sins are really introduced into the piece through my role and then manipulate me.

How do you see your role evolve throughout the work?

I see my role as a reflection almost memory through the work of past experiences, building to a final action that drives my role from the beginning.

Which of the sins turns deadly for 'man'?

The work is abstracted so none of the sins 'kill man' but Wrath would be the sin that 'destroys' man in the is work.

What will the audience like about this work?

All the elements of the work are grand and the story is known. Costume and design, lighting, sound score and the choreography are all bold and consuming which will drive the audiences engagement. Along with the common understanding of the 7 deadly sins.

Costume and set design by Bill Haycock

Interview with Bill Haycock

1. What brief did you get from Natalie to create the costumes for this work?

Natalie and I collaborated to evolve the ideas of how each sin would be visualised in costume. A large part was knowing who would be playing each sin - something Natalie explored through earlier workshopping rehearsals. We decided each sin would have a gold "skin" that would be shed and that they would actually mostly dance in minimal black underwear-like costumes.... The gold costumes were often quite elaborate and designed consciously to make a strong visual statement.

2. Each sin has its own signature style, what and where did you draw inspiration from for each costume?

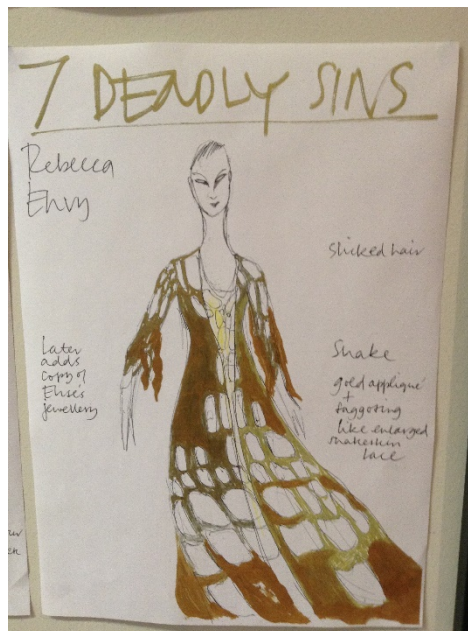
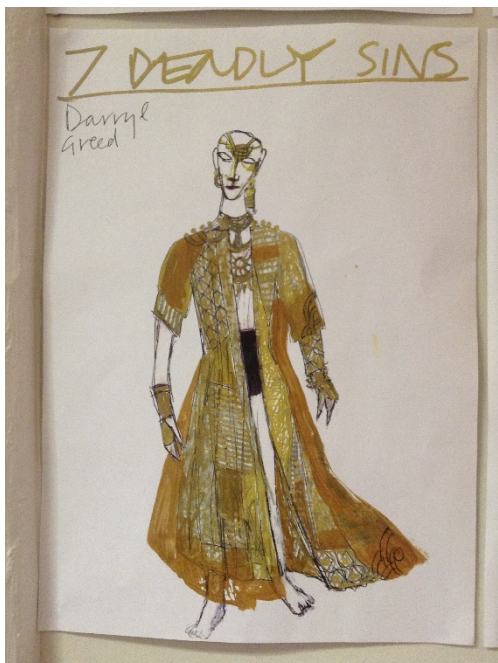
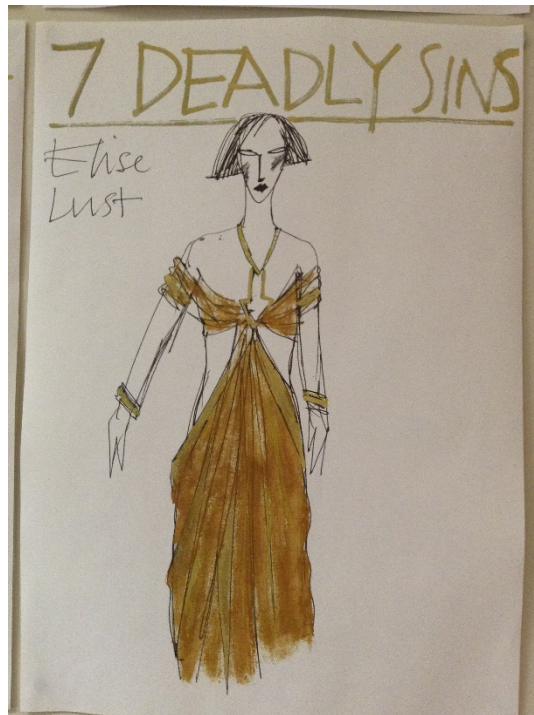
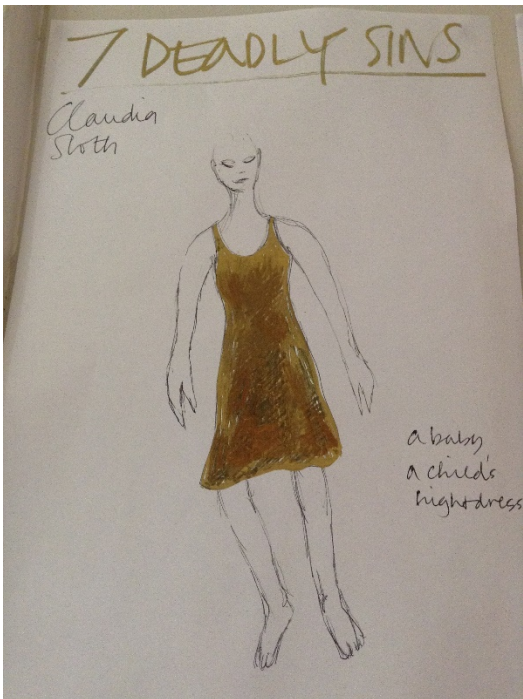
Some like "envy" developed from animal imagery (the snake)... "gluttony" aimed to suggest a cockroach but also drew on the look and patterning of some Japanese armour. Others drew from diverse imagery: sloth was designed to be child-like... a big singlet for a sleeping innocent, wrath was inspired by a Giotto painting of the sin consumed by flames etc

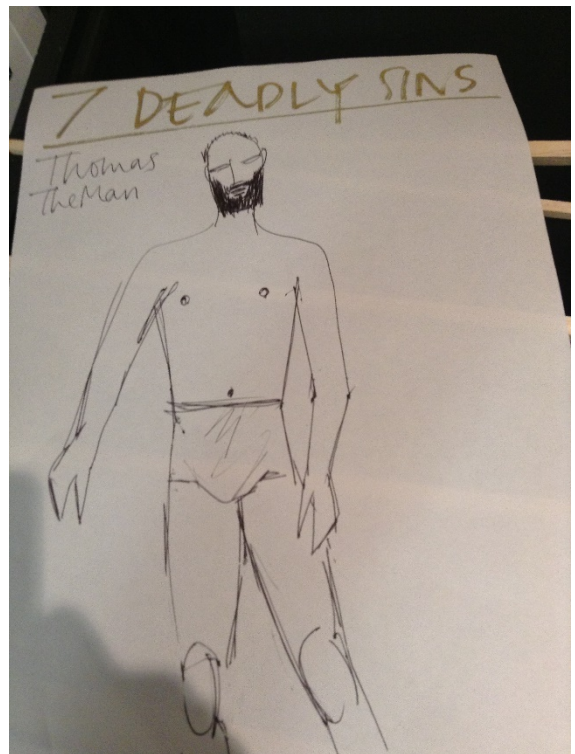
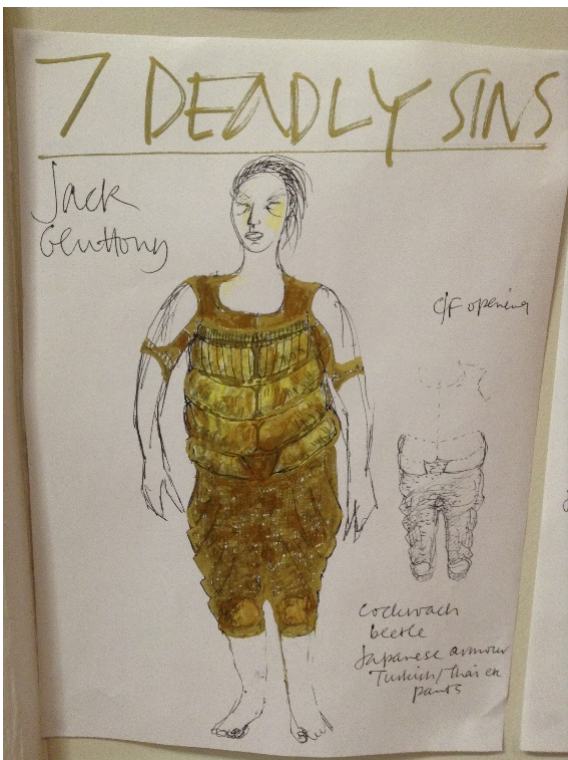
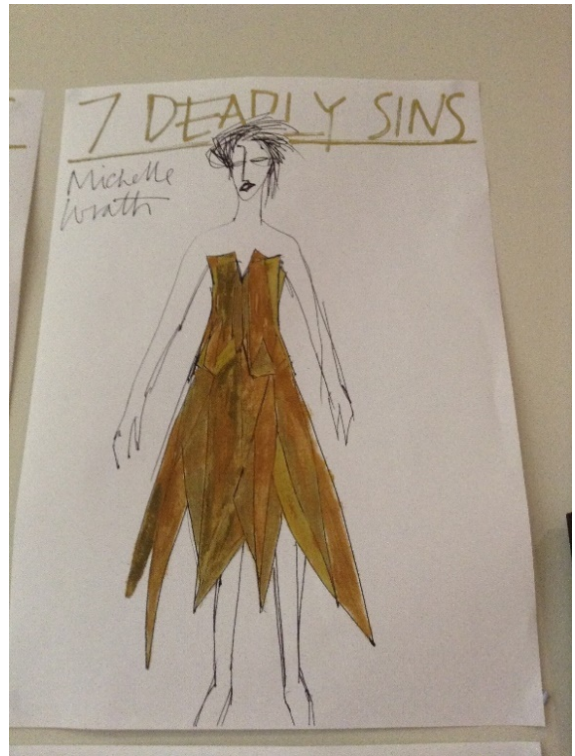
3. Were you responsible for the set and box designs? if so what were you trying to create?

Yes... the designer is responsible for everything the audience sees (i.e. the sets/ costumes/ props but sometimes also special effects and projected imagery etc. though these and the Lighting design are the separate responsibility of other closely collaborating designers).

The box idea evolved through some very different versions of the work into a box for "The Man" (essentially his living room) and from the TV he's watching (from which Sloth emerges) into a distinct, unique gold box for each sin:

- a TV for Sloth
- a feeding trough for Gluttony
- a large "collecting box" slightly suggestive of a coffin, for Greed
- a snake box with eye/breathing holes for Envy
- a display box for Lust
- a smoking flame/hell box for Wrath
- a mirrored jewellery box for Pride





EXAMINE

Example Appreciation - Task 1

Task: After watching 'Seven Deadly Sins' discuss the visual setting presented in this work. Describe the costume, boxes, and set pieces. How do these non-movement components support the narrative journey of this work?

Your students could present this task as an essay or oral presentation. Students should justify their interpretations and evaluations by referring to the relevant dance components, skills and research.

Within the work 'Seven Deadly Sins', the visual components are rich and diverse to create a feast for the eyes. The Playhouse theatre's simplistic proscenium arch is transformed into a rich and visually captivating setting.

Each dancers' costume revealing an ancient time with suggestions of Cleopatra, Japanese warriors, 'The King and I' with Bill Haycock's use of heavy, layered and rich gold fabric to create this elegant scene. Each dancers' sin is beautifully represented within the costume design to symbolise the ancient concept of 'The Sins' all most dating back to when time began – the sins of man. As the work progresses, the dancers are stripped bare of their sins to reveal minimal clothing – black underwear; to represent the baring of the psyche and the man's inner mind. Haycock has met the brief given by Weir in the costume design in making her sins come to life.

The work of the 'Seven Deadly Sins' opens with boxes surrounding the perimeter of the stage. Each dancer has a box to suit their sin. Centrally placed is a large open black and gold box used to represent man's abode. This open square like structure reveals an opening into this 'Man's' life. We see two chairs perhaps symbolising a lounge room. The gold box sitting in the structure's front represents a television. A frozen mannequin sits but then seems to begin to move revealing a man behind it. The 'couch potato' is driven out of his unconscious state as 'something' starts to emerge from the television. Throughout the work the dancers use their boxes to dance in, on and around to begin to explore who they are as their sin. The boxes are simple, gold, hole-ridden, long and narrow, on wheels, mirrored, small and wide all to match each character. The set helps to take the audience from reality to fantasy as the man begins to get drawn in by this surreal exploration of the sins in his mind.

Overall, the set, boxes and costumes all help to support to storyline of 'man's' exploration of the Seven Deadly Sins.

Example Appreciation - Task 2

Task: Watch 'Seven Deadly Sins' by Expressions Dance Company. Compare and contrast two of the sins. Select two of the dancers (sins) and describe how their movements are similar and different. Refer to the movement components of action, space, time and energy to answer this question.

Example:

Within the movements presented by Pride and Envy we see many contrasting elements within the movement components. Within the movement from the beginning of their duet, a power play is represented. Envy (Rebecca Hall) tries to manipulate and control Pride (Ben Chapman) by being behind him, pushing, climbing and giving weight to the movements she performs. Her goal is to 'take' the sin of Pride for herself because she is jealous or envious of him. In contrast, Pride's movement which were once strong with an upright, strongly held posture is now forced to fight for his stance. Envy uses wrapping, enveloping, smothering movement usually on a high to medium level. Pride is controlled in even-tempoed movement performed on a medium to low level. His energy also changes throughout this duet with movements using momentum and swinging actions. Pride tries to control Envy by using robotic movements to manipulate her movements. There are moments when she plays copy-cat following and trying to steal the actions of Pride. The duet speeds up as Envy aims to take what she

wants. This highly athletic work displays the struggle of these two sins with moments where they both fight to keep what they possess.

If your students are attending a post-show discussion, they may even want to have questions prepared about the performance that they may ask the creative team.

Example Appreciation - Task 3

Task: Watch 'Seven Deadly Sins' by Expressions Dance Company. The opening of the work takes the audience from reality to fantasy. Describe the initial moment that 'Man' meets the first sin 'Sloth'. Outline the movement components within this scene that takes the 'Man' on this journey of inner turmoil of his psyche.

Other interactions between the sins could be explored within this task as well – description of Man's interaction with 'the' deadly sin.

'Man' is drawn into the fantasy or his inner 'sloth' escapes as he is transfixed by the television in his lounge room. He sees Sloth and acknowledges her but seems bewildered at first, unsure of what he is watching. This 'couch potato' of a man suddenly now has the burden of 'sloth'. He initially watches as this sin reveals itself then he begins to interact with this curling, rolling and low levelled creature. This interaction starts slow and is quite fluid almost liquid-like flowing from a state of bewilderment to a chasing game of weight play. Interwoven heavy actions of supporting, walking, twisting, rising and falling is shown. This work relies heavily on consistent contact and movement involving almost continual flow of movement to establish the dancers' relationship and role.

Your students could present this task as an essay, and include appropriately referenced images of the performance with their statement. Students should justify their interpretations and evaluations by referring to the relevant dance components, skills and research.

Example Appreciation - Task 4 (Junior description task)

Task: Watch 'Seven Deadly Sins' by Expressions Dance Company. Describe any literal movements that are performed by the sins and identify how they have been abstracted. These movements may be your interpretation of literal movement but they would be suggested images that would match your selected sin. You may wish to describe one sin or many.

Daryl Brandwood's movement of Greed present many literal movement that has been abstracted. When we think of greed, we think of money, empires, hard work, power and stress. The movement that Brandwood presents shows variations of power hungry, stress driven work. Brandwood shows movements such as heart attack gestures – grabbing at his chest. An action to show the use of a defibrillator, pulsing of the chest and a knife removed from the heart. Other movements shown are robotic, sawing, wrapping, use of the phone, neck ache, stress movements, mannequin movements, robotic, mundane, repetitive, twisted hands. Movements are compressed and controlled. Brandwood uses the box as a way to define his space. He mimes box shapes, actions of listening. You see abstracted concepts such as 'monkey on your back' or 'knives in the back' as we would see in a high stress driven greedy business world.

Example Choreography - Task 1

Task:

As a part of the choreographic development of 'Seven Deadly Sins', Natalie Weir did a lot of research of the historical and pictorial background of this concept.

Select one of the 'Seven Deadly Sins' and research it historically and pictorially. Create movement based on what that sin physically suggests based on the action words and images discovered in your research.

Determine how you will present your dance, will you show a selection of transitioned freeze frames of what you discovered pictorially and then the movement that is a true representation of the sin.

Think about your use of space and energy.

Choose some music or a medley of music to represent your sin.

Written documentation and/or a choreographic log could be used to justify choice of movement and non-movement components.

Example Choreography - Task 2

Task: Using the inspiration of 'Man' from the 'Seven Deadly Sins', create movement that begins as a true representation of 'Man' or 'Woman' that then transforms into one of the sins. Present a smooth transition that seamlessly changes from 'Man' (literal/pedestrian movement) to a sin (abstracted, surreal movement).

Once movement has been established, dancers will need to select appropriate music to match their contemporary movement. Think about mood, emotion or a narrative that may be reflected in the work.

Students / Dancers need to think when choreographing about their use of space, manipulating the energy and selecting movement that truly shows their character or narrative.

Students will need to explore, select and manipulate dance components and skills to convey their stated intent. Consider the year level of the student, and whether working with a partner to determine the duration of the work.

Example Choreography Task 3

Task: Using the inspiration of the sins from the 'Seven Deadly Sins', create movement that shows a true contrast between the sins. For example – Brainstorm movement that begins as a true representation of 'Pride'. Develop this movement until the dancer has a good phrase. Dancers then brainstorm movement that contrasts that selected sin. For example: Pride vs Sloth. Develop movement that represents 'Sloth'. Once both contrasted phrases have been developed, create a smooth transition that seamlessly changes from 'Pride to Sloth'

Once movement has been established, dancers will need to select appropriate music to match their selected sin.

Students / Dancers need to think when choreographing about their use of space, manipulating the energy and selecting movement that truly shows their selected sin.

Other examples – Wrath vs Lust

Students will need to explore, select and manipulate dance components and skills to convey their stated intent. Consider the year level of the student, and whether working with a partner to determine the duration of the work.

You may also wish your students to participate in an Expressions Dance Company contemporary dance Choreography workshop as part of the Performance Workshop package, to learn how the company goes about creating their own choreography.

Example Choreography Task 4

(Class activity or Year 11 Semester 1 task)

Task: In small groups (3-4) or for a more advanced group (7 dancers) each dancer selects one of the sins to create movement for. They create movement 32 counts together that is performed in varying ways to suit the selected sin. For example – Lust (slow and slinky), Wrath (fast and percussive), Gluttony (slow and heavy), Pride (slow, medium to high level, strong posture), Sloth (slow and swinging), Envy (quick and vibratory), Greed (slow, to fast, robotic, low level)

Dancers then create a freeze frame that they stay in while each dancer presents their sin solo. While frozen, each dancer takes turns presenting their 1-3 minute contemporary solo that represents their sin.

To conclude their performance – since the sins are deadly the group needs to decide how the work will end. Which sin will triumph over the others.

Rehearse this work until all elements are smooth and seamless.

Students will need to explore, select and manipulate movement and non-movement components and skills to convey their stated intent.

EXTEND

Explore

There are many elements discussed by Natalie Weir, the designer and the dancers where they drew inspiration from to create their work. It is suggested that these could be further explored and researched by the students, in order to enhance their understanding of the stimulus for the work.

Some themes that could be explored include:

The Sins (wrath, lust, greed, pride, gluttony, envy, sloth)

Obsession

Ancient art

Music – electronic

Reality VS fantasy

Botticelli paintings

Giotto paintings

Connect

Youtube, Vimeo and Facebook are valuable education tools, with secondary school students being very high users of the internet and social networking sites.

Youtube

There are many clips on Youtube that show the different artistic interpretations of the 'Seven Deadly Sins' through drama, opera and dance. Students could research and find a work to compare and contrast to deepen their understanding of this work.

Facebook

Rehearsal development and snippets of costume and choreography are often placed on the EDC facebook page, please LIKE us to keep up to date with what we are doing and all upcoming performance dates, workshops and EDC events. Connect with Expressions Dance Company on Facebook! To become a fan, go to <http://www.facebook.com/expressionsdancecompany>

Engage

These resources are listed as a reference point for students. They may be used for research, to connect the performance with easy pop culture references, or to understand the content in the work. A student might use some of the music as a stimulus to create their own work about the 'Seven Deadly Sins'. Some of the resources were also used by the Creative Team in their development of the work.

Websites

The following websites may be useful for your students to learn more about the company, QPAC or any of contributing artists...

- Expressions Dance Company www.expressionsdancecompany.org.au
- QPAC <http://www.qpac.com.au/>

Literature

For more information about Expressions Dance Company, why not check out...

- *Brookes Street to Brooklyn*, by Denise Richardson

EXPRESSIONS DANCE COMPANY

History

Expressions Dance Company was founded in 1984 by Maggi Sietsma AM and Abel Valls. The Company gave its first performance in Brisbane in 1985 as part of the national conference of the Australian Society for Education in the Arts. The first production was Maggi Sietsma's Snow Drops and in that first year the company's commitment to presenting contemporary works by Australian choreographers was clear.

Over the years Expressions Dance Company has featured the work of many Australian choreographers such as current Artistic Director Natalie Weir, Rosetta Cook, Graeme Watson and Sue Peacock.

Between 1985 and 2008 Maggi Sietsma AM created over 35 works for Expressions Dance Company including the widely acclaimed Alone Together, Rites of Spring and Virtually Richard3. During his time as General Manager, Abel Valls also created original scores for many of the Company's works.

In 2009 the company welcomed a new Artistic Director, Natalie Weir, and a new General Manager, Libby Lincoln, who immediately set to work building on the good work done to date, and expanding the national and international reputation and reach of the rapidly evolving company.

In 2010, Natalie Weir presented her first work as Artistic Director, Where the Heart Is, to great critical acclaim. This was soon followed by While Others Sleep, which also garnered high praise and was noted for being the first artistic collaboration ventured by presenting partner, Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts.

Throughout its history, Expressions Dance Company has received numerous awards and has also received invitations to perform in over 15 countries including The Taipei International Festival, The Ludwigsburg (Stuttgart) International Festival, The Beijing Modern Dance Festival, Tokyo's Next Wave Festival, Linz (Austria) Dance Festival, The Guangdong Modern Dance Festival and the Busan International Dance Festival (Korea).

Expressions Dance Company has received financial assistance from the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland and has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.



Training Partner

