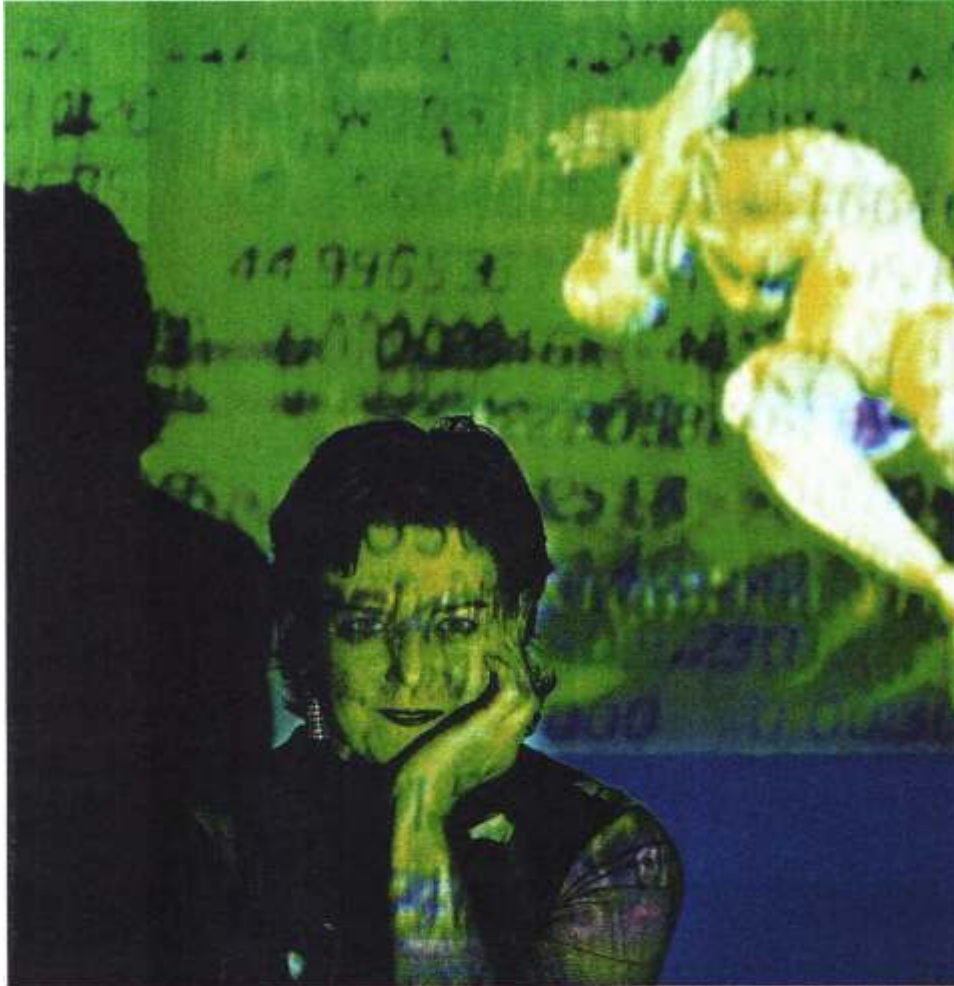


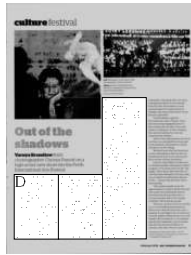


culture festival



Out of the shadows

Varnya Bromilow finds choreographer Chrissie Parrott on a high as her new show hits the Perth International Arts Festival



Despite the fact that her company shut its doors more than a decade ago, Chrissie Parrott is still perhaps the most recognisable name in Perth contemporary dance. Since that time, the choreographer has continued to teach and practise, picking up valuable new skills along the way.

Parrott's new show incorporates cutting-edge dance software and is about to make its debut in this year's Perth International Arts Festival. *Metadance in Resonant Light* is Parrott's first fully independent work since the closure of the Chrissie Parrott Dance Company, and its creator is pretty darn excited about it.

"I'm in my element," she laughs. "I'm a bit nutty when I'm choreographing . . . I think most people are when they're in the middle of a creative project. It's all right. I like being a nutty person. My dancers understand — I think. I hope. We're very excited. And more than anything, we're really thrilled about the Festival picking it up. It's been a while since I've had a work in the Festival."

Metadance came out of an initial installation work that was performed in 2006. "This work has been growing for three years now," Parrott says. "Initially Jonathan Mustard and I did the installation at the Moores Building in 2006. Stage two was at The Bakery in 2007. And now in 2008, a revised version will be performed at the Festival."

The work has been created using the *Danceforms* software program. Parrott's face lights up with enthusiasm explaining how the installation works.

"Four dancers — Josh Mu, Sharlene Campbell, Sally Blatchford, Jacqui Claus — each work essentially to imitate the movements of the 3-D avatar in the program. We look at each frame in a

3-D plane to get the shapes. The moves that come out are just wonderful. What you find when you're manipulating the avatar is that it will go to places that your own body won't go to or to places a dancer's body could go to but they don't naturally go there.

"We end up with curious combination of movements in a small phrase. It's very complex choreographically."

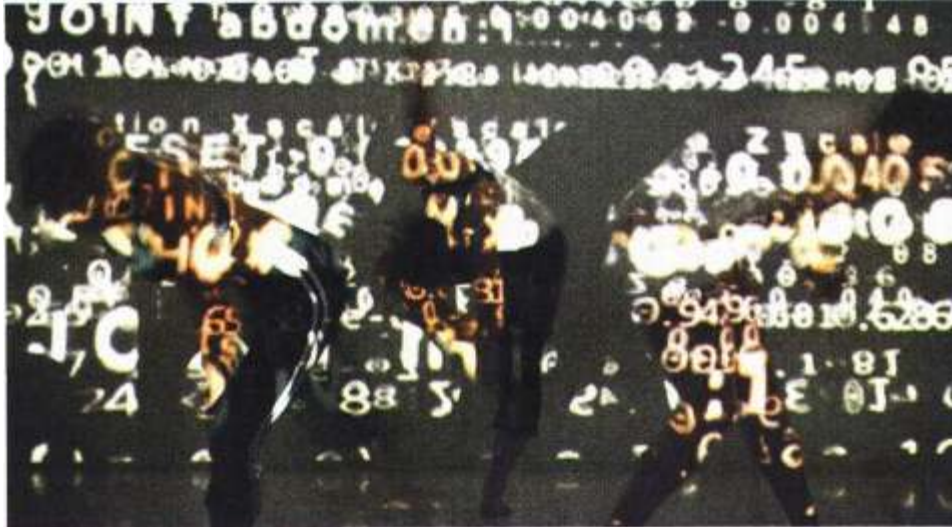
Thematically, *Metadance* tied in neatly with one of the Festival's themes this year — architecture. The work celebrates the architectural beauty of dance and how it translates to text, animation and sound. The audience walks through 40 swathes of translucent fabric that carve the stage into a maze while animated figures and data are projected on to the materials.

"It's an ambitious work," admits Parrott. "I chose the performers because they are wonderful dancers but also because they're quick thinkers and they have the patience to work with the technology. Especially in the initial stages, the process can be quite slow."

The work will be performed with two others. *Digital Twin* was created using the *Poser 6* program. Parrott describes it as the most experimental piece on the evening's program. In it, Josh Mu replicates the movements of the avatar, performing with it on stage.

"It's a duet between the real and the virtual," Parrott explains. "The other piece is a film featuring Sally Blatchford and Sharlene Campbell dancing in one of Perth's oldest buildings. I have seven hours of footage," she grins.

Parrott's new works come at an exciting time for Perth's dance



Left Metadance in Resonant Light choreographer Chrissie Parrott.

Above Dancers Sally Blatchford, Sharlene Campbell and Jacqui Claus rehearsing Metadance.

Pictures: Michael O'Brien

community. Like many other art forms, contemporary dance is set to benefit from the State Government's recent announcement of a serious boost in funding. Like many of her fellow artists, Parrott is optimistic.

"I'm the ultimate optimist. We've been in a state of hiatus. There have been things happening but I've been waiting for the tide to turn and I think it is starting to. It had to happen. Not only the funding but some key organisational changes.

"Some of the old guard has moved on and there are exciting fresh new people in key positions. Government is finally starting to cue into things.

"We don't know the final details yet so we're all waiting to find out how we benefit and how we access those funds. But everyone will get something."

I ask her if she thinks it's important to establish another contemporary dance company. "It certainly won't be me!" she

laughs. "Been there, done that! But it is vital that there ultimately becomes some sort of vehicle for professional dancers in WA — because that has been what's been missing.

"The creative people do get the opportunities to create work but the ones who want to be professional dancers have been forced to go interstate or overseas because there's not enough work here. We've lost key people.

"However, we have to be very careful not to set something up prematurely before we've done the research to do it properly. It can happen very soon but not too soon. Maybe within the next 12 to 18 months. But certainly it's a very positive time for the community. It gives people that little bit of extra confidence to continue with their obsessive passion."

Metadance in Resonant Light is at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts from Thursday to February 21.