

MEDIA RELEASE



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New study to give Australian dancers digital edge

The computer technology responsible for lifelike characters in video games and memorable film creatures, such as Gollum in Lord of the Rings and Mumble the tap dancing penguin star of Happy Feet, offers choreographers a way to fine tune movement in previously unimagined detail.

An Australian Research Council Discovery Grant for a project led by Dr Kim Vincs, senior lecturer in dance at Deakin University, will help Australian dance companies use Motion Capture in ways that enhance their creativity and ensure they have access to technology that can take their artistry to new levels.

Motion Capture has already been used by international choreographers, Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown and Bill T. Jones and European dancers that include Wayne McGregor, Emilio Greco, William Forsythe and Siobhan Davies.

“Australian dance companies are dependent on income from international markets for their survival and growth. Their ability to compete depends on them staying at the leading edge of choreographic development world wide,” says Dr Vincs.

She is collaborating with mathematician Dr Vicky Mak, a lecturer in Deakin’s School of Engineering and Information Technology; and biomechanics researcher Associate Professor Richard Smith, of the University of Sydney, to explore and apply the three dimensional digital technology to Australian dance.

“If you record movement using video it is two dimensional. By putting a dancer into a velcro suit with upwards of 50 markers we can use an array of 24 cameras in a specially designed studio to track every marker to within half a millimetre. This allows dancers and choreographers to look at very precise movements and make changes as a work is evolving. They can use the technology to go back and look at a movement many times and adjust it in precise detail. They can look at what one part of the body is doing in relation to another and gain an amazing level of accuracy. It really is a great tool to help refine the language of movement,” says Dr Vincs.

She is confident the motion capture technology will give even experienced dancers and choreographers new insights into the subtle processes of creating artistic movement and the minute shifts in movement patterning that distinguish one choreographer’s work from another.

The study should also help clarify and explain how choreography leads to new kinds of dance movement and enhance the ability of Australians to create innovative new moves that will thrill audiences worldwide.