



Forever a Dancer – Joanna Pollitt

By Andrea Viney

When Joanna Pollitt says she'll be dancing forever, I think she really means it. For the 34 year old dancer, there is no undesirable age lurking around the corner, signalling the end of her performing career, but rather years ahead of opportunity and discovery.

A 2008 SCOPE participant, Jo has the credentials and drive to get the most from the program. Her skills, although centred around her biggest passion, are certainly not refined to dance. She boasts a Masters degree in Creative Arts and an impressive line-up of dance companies and artists she has performed, researched and choreographed for, both in Australia and abroad. The distinguished list includes the likes of Tasdance, Terrapin Theatre, Jennifer Monson, Rosalind Crisp, and Chrissie Parrott. Jo has created many works including 'Room' which was presented at the Perth International Arts Festival, and 'Par Avion', a full length work, presented at the Peacock Theatre in Hobart. She co-directed the Hobart Fringe Festival in 1999 and for two years, held a role as Dance Curator for *Boiler Room*, a national improvisation festival in Hobart. Jo currently lectures in Dance Improvisation at WAAPA, writes academically and creatively, is a project based researcher at Curtin University and all the while, maintains a diligent physical practice in dance with her 'response project', performing whenever she has the chance. She also juggles all this with two young children who have never spent a day in child-care. (See article by Jo, 'Dancing for Two' at www.ausport.gov.au *)

One would wonder if this successful Western Australian mother had anything left to learn, but Jo believes that with the help of SCOPE, she will secure a future that houses an inspired fulfilling and sustainable career in and around dance. Through the many facets of Jo's life and career, there is hardly time for pre-occupation with the all-common 'career transition' that most dancers face in their thirties.

'It really is a gift,' she says of SCOPE, as she laughs at the irony of her transition, bringing her full circle back to dance again. 'I'm working more now, than I ever have – it is funny how I am transitioning into being a dancer again... I'm having a great time!' Jo talks with pride about creating a solo performance for Chrissie Parrott, describing it as inspiring to see a woman in her fifties still performing. She remarks that she will be the same, apologising that we won't be



able to stop her. 'I think it's great for audiences to see a mature person on stage – it gives them a different perspective.' Jo believes that older dancers reflect a certain comfort in their physicality and a humanness, to which audiences can relate. 'As dancers, I think we are well-positioned to exchange that information.'

As Jo talks, I am aware that this 'exchange of information' is a driving force behind her life and career. She is passionate about growing her mind and skills through research, creativity and the greater network that surrounds the Arts industry. SCOPE is just one opportunity she has embraced, and through it, many others have emerged. Jo has 'found the confidence to actually do some of the things she had long thought about, like writing'. 'SCOPE offers me a highly charged reflective and responsive career development focus, giving me visibility as an artist and academic and connecting me to people I would otherwise not have accessed.'

With new skills being revealed and career doors opening all around her, Jo is excited about the next phase of her career. With an application into Arts Tasmania to collaborate with an emerging writer, and plans for further research into the complex balance between performance based careers and children, Jo laughs ironically about all the spare time she will have when her two boys both go off to school. 'I'll be swinging a leg all over the place,' she says.