



Queensland  
**Ballet**



Queensland Ballet and  
Queensland Music Festival present

# The Little Green Road to Fairyland

PRODUCTION NOTES FOR THE CLASSROOM

# Contextual Information

**Choreographer** Paul Boyd

**Composer** Elena Kats-Chernin

**Music Arrangement** Steve Newcombe

**Music performed by** Camerata — Queensland's Chamber Orchestra

**Dramaturg** Sandra Gattenhof

**Set Designer** Joshua McIntosh

**Costume Designer** Noelene Hill

**Lighting** Cameron Goerg



## History of the production

— **Sisters' Annie R. Rentoul and Ida Rentoul Outhwaite created *The Little Green Road to Fairyland* in 1922.**

It has been mentioned in literary circles as one of the best loved of all Australian children's stories from the 1920s to the 1950s. Bringing a uniquely Australian flavour to fairy tales, the sisters were tremendously influential in creating an Australian identity for childhood in many ways.

Originally presented by the Queensland Music Festival in 2011, the initial production featured choreography and direction by Rosetta Cook with story adaptation by John Haag. The story drew inspiration from the original storybook *The Little Green Road to Fairyland* (LGRTF). With an original music score composed by Elena Kats-Chernin, the performance featured the unique voice of soprano Katie Noonan. This retelling was further supported by the narration of Christine Johnston.

This new production, co-produced by Queensland Ballet and Queensland Music Festival, will be based off a new interpretation of the original storybook maintaining many parts of the original musical score by composer, Elena Kats-Chernin, with choreography by Paul Boyd.

## Synopsis

— Two small children, Maykin and her brother Robin are being settled in their beds by their mother who is reading their favourite book, *The Little Green Road to Fairyland*. Slowly they fall to sleep.

A Fairy appears through their bedroom window, sprinkles her magic fairy dust over the sleeping children and takes Maykin and Robin on a magical journey. Their dream begins!

Fairy, with her magic wings, wand and flute, along with the mystical voice of The Spirit of Fairyland arrive in a Magic Forest. They are greeted by a Blue Wren and together they reveal and bring to life four magic, enchanted trees, The Trees of Love, Magic, Music and Compassion.

Maykin and Robin, still in their pyjamas arrive in the Magic Forest and begin to discover the mystical surroundings with their new found friends.

Mary, a sad and lonely woman, whose husband and young daughter Lily have recently passed away, wanders despondently through the forest with a bouquet of lilies to take to their graves. Fairy must do something to relieve Mary's suffering.

Fairy and her friends bring Mary back to the Tree of Love and it is there that Fairy transfers the magic of her own heart over to Mary so that she may feel love again. When losing her fairy heart, Fairy also loses her wings and she becomes a more mortal character. Everyone in the Magic Forest celebrates Mary's new found heart.

Leaving the Magic Forest on an adventure, Fairy and her friends come upon a young, shy boy, Jasper who wants to have the pleasure of playing a tuneful flute as his flute is old and broken. He is fascinated by the magic music that Fairy plays on her flute and so everyone takes Jasper back to the magic Tree of Music and it is there that Fairy gifts her flute to him.

Jasper, with his new flute, leads his friends on a path where they come upon a young, poor lost girl, Sylvie, who is clothed in a very dull, colourless dress. Mary's motherly instincts take over and she comforts a sad Sylvie. Sylvie so wants to have something beautiful to wear so Fairy has an idea of how to fulfil her wish.

Everyone accompanies Sylvie back to the Tree of Compassion where Fairy transforms her fairy wings into a beautiful new dress for Sylvie.

Fairy is still aware that Mary is sad about her lost child from the Tree of Magic, a new born baby is granted to Mary. Filled with motherly love, Mary no longer needs the magic of Fairy's heart and so returns the magic heart back to Fairy.

Fairy now realises her mission is complete. She has helped all her new found friends and now desires to return to her home in Fairyland. A beautiful butterfly is sent from Fairyland to help guide Fairy back home and so she invites her friends to accompany her on her journey along the Little Green Road. On the journey, Fairy transforms back into her magic self, her wings appear and she is now complete to return home.

At the end of the Little Green Road is a fairy size mossy green door and so she bids farewell to her mortal friends but invites Maykin and Robin into her fairy world. Joyfully, Fairy, Butterfly, Maykin and Robin dance in the beauty of Fairyland with the ever present Spirit of Fairyland.

Back in the bedroom, Maykin and Robin wake up to find a wand in their bed. Was it a dream after all or were they in fact transported to another world, a world only visited by those with a magic heart and who truly believe in miracles!





## Notes from the Choreographer

# Paul Boyd

— In its entirety this new production of *The Little Green Road to Fairyland* will be 50 minutes long, including seven dancers, one singer and a live chamber orchestra of five musicians.

After reading the book many times, it became very clear to me that the complete book with all its characters would need to be scaled down, so I began the process of elimination with the storyline. I chose to keep the characters and the morals of the story that I felt would represent the book with as much honesty and integrity as possible. I began to build the story around the original four magical trees and decided that each tree would represent four different aspects of human existence, the trees of love, music, compassion and magic. One of the main characters, Fairy, weaves her magic with the help of the four trees.

This production will be specifically created for a younger audience so my greatest desire is for them to be transported to a land of magic. The collaboration between choreographer, costume, set and lighting designer is of vital importance to create and allow this theatre magic to become a reality. Therefore, each creative must work towards the same vision.

The original production of *The Little Green Road to Fairyland*, was approximately 90 minutes long and so my music choices from composer Elena Kats-Chernin came from that original score. I had the pleasure of sitting with Elena at her piano, in her home to rediscover a new planning of her wondrous score. She was most understanding of my new interpretation of the storyline, as we changed the order of the score and she even composed a new section. It has been a very collaborative effort compiling information and ideas with Elena, singer Katie Noonan, dramaturg Sandra Gattenhof, musicians of Camerata and the creatives.

### Paul Boyd Biography

Paul's performing career spanned 25 years in companies in Germany, Switzerland, and at Queensland Ballet.

He danced the major classics as well as works by Kylian, Forsythe, Ek, Christe, Balanchine, Neumeier, Petit, Weir, and Klaus, among others, and received the German Critics Award for Best Up and Coming Artist and Best Established Artist in Europe. Paul's choreographic works have been performed by Queensland Ballet, The Australian Ballet (Bodytorque season), Bundesjugendballett (Hamburg), Suzhou Ballet Theatre (China), Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, WAAPA, QUT, Sydney City Youth Ballet, and Hong Kong Ballet Group. Uneven Ground was performed by the Royal Ballet School (London), as well as touring to New York and Japan. Paul has been Guest Teacher for the Royal Ballet School, Hong Kong Ballet, Semperoper and Deutsche Oper am Rhein (Germany), West Australian Ballet and Perth's Graduate College, and Architzanz (Tokyo).



# Movement & Music

## Movement

— **My movement in general, as a choreographer, is based on the classical technique.**

I believe a good strong classical technique from a dancer allows the choreographer to explore and discover movement, with lines and shapes that are aesthetically pleasing to the eye of the viewer. I also believe in being true to the emotion that is being portrayed in the choreography. Sometimes this means allowing the classical lines and posture of the dancer to be slightly more relaxed, still with an integrity of aesthetic.

When creating narrative ballets with different characters I think it is very important to give the characters signature moves (motifs) that relate to their individual personalities. An audience member will relate to these motifs and feel more connected to that particular character.

For a narrative work, every dancer, not only technically but artistically, is extremely important. The role of Mary, for example, is extremely important to me as she is an older character carrying many adult emotions after the deaths of her husband and young daughter. It would be very difficult to expect a younger dancer to portray these emotions with real sincerity, so I am thrilled that former Queensland Ballet Principal Artist, Kimberley Davis will be joining the cast to portray Mary. I choreographed many ballets for Kimberley when we were both Principal Artists of Queensland Ballet so I know and completely trust her artistic integrity and am sure she will add a mature artistic weight to the production.

I believe there is great power in silence on the stage, as embodied by Mary's character and her interpretation of sadness. The role of Fairy will require a dancer with fast footwork and a sound technical ability.

Maykin and Robin, the two children, should portray their roles with child like zest, innocence and complete belief in the magic that takes place in the narrative. It was very important that these two characters were small in stature so as to be believable as young children.

## Music

— **As the original ballet was inspired by the book's illustrations, the music was tailored specifically for dance by composer Elena Kats-Chernin.**

Born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Elena Kats-Chernin studied music in Moscow, Sydney and Hanover.

She has created works across nearly every genre, from intimate compositions for piano to pieces for chamber ensembles, full-scale choir and symphony orchestras as well as ballets and operas. Her music was used at the opening ceremonies of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games and the 2003 Rugby World Cup. She is a recipient of many prestigious prizes including Green Room, Helpmann, Limelight, Sounds Australian, Sydney Theatre and Sidney Myer Performing Arts Awards.

Companies setting ballets to her scores include Nederlands Dans Theater, Ballet Theatre Munich, San Francisco Ballet and the Stuttgart Ballet.

The extraordinary reach of Elena Kats-Chernin's music also spans the worlds of film and television. *Eliza Aria*, from her score for Meryl Tankard's ballet *Wild Swans* (commissioned by The Australian Ballet), was used by British bank Lloyds TSB in their celebrated ad campaign *For the Journey*. Her *Russian Rag* was used in the claymation feature film *Mary and Max*, by Oscar-winning director Adam Elliot. Both pieces have featured as the theme for *Late Night Live* on ABC Radio National. Her 10-hour adaptation of Monteverdi's opera trilogy at the Komische Oper Berlin, directed by Barrie Kosky, was broadcast live on the 3SAT TV channel across Europe in 2012. Elena Kats-Chernin was featured in *Creative Minds*, a six-part TV portrait documentary series by Robin Hughes.

For the centenary of World War I, Elena Kats-Chernin's five-movement work *Meeting the Sun* was commissioned by the Kokoda Memorial Track Walkway and performed by the Royal Australian Navy Band and the Sydney Children's Choir at the Anzac Day Dawn Service. Her movement *Landing* was featured in the *Gallipoli Symphony*, which premiered in Istanbul in August 2015.

Recent works include a children's opera *Snow White and the 77 Dwarves*, for the Komische Oper Berlin; the TV opera *The Divorce*; *The Witching Hour*, a concerto for eight double basses and orchestra, premiered by the Australian World Orchestra; *Singing Trees*, for the Australian Chamber Orchestra; *Prelude and Cube*, commissioned by the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra as part of their 25th anniversary celebrations; and her third piano concerto, *Lebewohl*, a tribute to Bach's first wife, Maria Barbara.

Elena Kats-Chernin's music is published exclusively by Boosey & Hawkes / Bote & Bock.

# Costumes and Set Production

## From the Costume Designer, Noelene Hill

— It is the Costume Designer's role to imagine and realise how the characters in the story will look.

Costumes not only provide something attractive for the dancer to wear, they reflect and support the visual style of the dance, help to tell the story and assist the dancer to portray their character. Dance costumes must also allow for freedom of movement so must be designed and constructed accordingly.

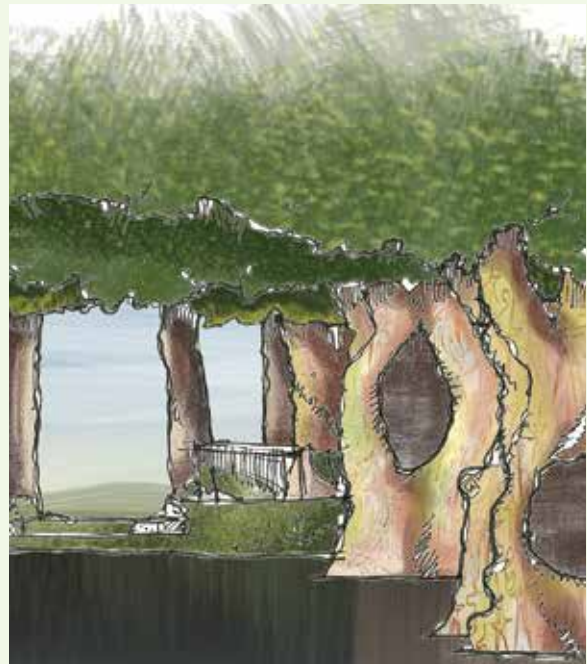
Creating costumes for *The Little Green Road to Fairyland* is a collaborative process with the Choreographer, Set Designer, Lighting Designer, Dancers and the Costumiers who make the costumes. I collect inspiration for the costumes from many sources commencing with thoroughly reading the story of *The Little Green Road to Fairyland* and researching the visual history of fairies. As well as this, I also consider the style of clothes worn in the early 1920's (when the book was written) and the colours and flora of the Australian landscape as the story is set in Australia. I also consider the nature of each character, their age and who they are in the story. This will influence the style of costume I create and the fabrics and colours I choose. I have used a lot of art finishing techniques in the costumes to help create the illusion of magical Fairyland creatures.



## From the Set Designer, Joshua McIntosh

— The set design for *The Little Green Road to Fairyland* needs foremost to technically support the dancers' needs for storytelling, but also hold a place for the players of Camerata — Queensland's Chamber Orchestra.

The musicians will be placed on the stage, and scattered amongst the forest world, and this creates all sorts of challenges. The musicians need to hear and see each other so they can tell the story, but the dancers still need space to move and perform and be able to tell the story through movement. These two methods of storytelling need to co-ordinate and mesh, not compete. The technical aspects of the set design have guided the placement of the four key trees of the story; Love, Compassion, Magic and Music. The look of these trees has been developed starting with notions of the traditional story book illustration styles, but also then related back to the Australian bush by using scribbly gums as the touchstone for pattern and texture. Each tree has a distinctive "scribbly pattern" that will be digitally printed on drapes of silk. These silk drapes will "skin" the trees and then be hand-painted to further accentuate their shapes. A particular effort has been made to tone the forest with the colours of the Australian landscape as this is a uniquely Australian tale



## Q & A with the Choreographer

# Paul Boyd

### Can you share the process of working with a dramaturg and how this may have supported the narrative and the development of the characters in the ballet?

Dramaturg, Sandra Gattenhof and I met towards the end of 2018 to discuss *The Little Green Road to Fairyland* and how our artistic relationship should develop. The collaboration is a very important one as we come together from two different worlds but two worlds that can assist each other in developing a production that from all angles has great clarity.

As a choreographer, in the lead up to rehearsals, I have let ideas settle in my mind after listening to the music, allowing the scene to construct as I feel it could work on stage. Then I would contact Sandra to hear her opinion and ensure she feels that the structure of the characters' personalities have clarity.

Once I arrive into the studio to choreograph, I have a very clear idea of the structure of the story from a musical and artistic perspective and it will be very helpful to have Sandra there to guide my ideas. Sandra's idea to have the five musicians of Camerata — Queensland's Chamber Orchestra blended and elevated into the set helped me tremendously to have a structure of what the set should portray and that the singing character of the Spirit of Fairyland should represent the voice of the Fairy.

### What choreographic devices or inspirations helped you to create an element of magic around the Fairy?

Actually, my four granddaughters, aged nine, five, four and two gave me a glimpse as to how little children see fairies! Their imagination as to where they find them in the garden, their colour, how fast they fly, whether they are asleep when we see them and what they, the fairies, tell them is so full of fantasy and imagination. The Fairy will have her magic flute, wand and wings and through fast, "flittering" movements, Fairy will execute her choreography with speed like precision. After Fairy gives her fairy heart to Mary, loses her wings, has a costume change and takes on a more mortal look, choreographically her role must alter. Towards the end of the ballet when Fairy transforms back into her magic self, her choreography should depict that of the sprightly fairy once more.

### How much of the choreography did you prepare before meeting and working with the dancers?

My choreographic journey began a couple of months ago prior to going into the studio. I worked alone to get a feel for some movement of how each character should move. I filmed this and then worked with the dancer who will portray the Fairy. I gave her the skeleton of the movement that I discovered and built the choreography from there. I will always put together certain elements of the choreography prior, so that I have a skeleton to work with when the creative process begins in the studio with the full cast of dancers.

### Do the dancers contribute or collaborate with you when developing movement for their character?

Absolutely! The contribution of each artist in the development of their roles is integral to the creative process. Many times I will have a movement prepared and try to sculpt it onto the body of the dancer, but their "instrument" reacts differently and they, more often than not, come up with a much better idea than I had originally. In partnering work I rely very much on the thread of movement that the dancers offer me. Linking the steps together can sometimes only be discovered through experimenting with ideas such as weight distribution, linking of arms, changing hand grips etc. Their skills not only as technicians but as artists will take me on a journey each rehearsal in directions that I would not have expected. The unexpected is the joy of discovering what is actually possible.

## Q&A with the Dramaturg Sandra Gattenhof

### Is it common to have a dramaturg for a ballet?

Dramaturgs have historically been associated with the making of theatre productions. The role of the dramaturg comes from a European tradition of theatre making that has been adopted across the world, apart from countries in Asia where it is largely still an emerging practice. The word dramaturg is a mixture of Greek and French and roughly means 'drama worker' but really a dramaturg is a 'wroughter of text'. Wrought means to work or shape so therefore a dramaturg is more a 'shaper of the text'. Traditionally dramaturgs have acted as literary advisers and researchers to assist a director in bringing a theatre text to life. In more recent times dramaturgs have become more active creators to bring the creative vision of the whole theatre work to life. It is not common to have a dramaturg in Australia working on a ballet however there is a tradition of this approach in Europe.

### Why do you think this is an important role, particularly in a production for young audiences?

I work creatively as a dramaturg. I do provide research to assist the choreographer but more often I position myself as 'the first audience'. As I have a long history in work in early childhood and primary arts education I bring my expertise to help the choreographer understand how a child may understand the ballet, how they may respond to the ballet and to ensure that children have multiple ways of entering into the story and experience. Not all children experience performance in the same way so part of my role is to ensure that there are a variety of entry points for a child audience that includes the story and the dance but is not limited to those either.

### What is the relationship between the dramaturg and the choreographer?

The relationship depends on how a choreographer likes to make a work. Some choreographers like to work collaboratively from the commencement of the process. Others like to create the choreography in the quiet of the studio, and there are lots of other combinations. It is important that a dramaturg works in a supportive role. My role with Paul Boyd, the choreographer for this work, seems to have developed as an interpreter. What I mean by this is that I seem to be working as an intermediary between his ideas and the child audience. I am helping Paul through questioning and discussion to understand how a child might understand what is happening on the stage and throughout the experience of the story. I should say that I have no experience as a dancer apart from being an avid watcher of all forms of dance, so I cannot contribute to the choreography. But I can ask, from a child's point of view, what a movement or a sequence of movement is meant to convey through character and emotion. I am a provocateur, just like most children I get curious.

### Have you been a dramaturg for any past Queensland Ballet productions? If so, what was the process for you, during rehearsals to assisting to stage the production?

I was the dramaturg for Queensland Ballet's *Little Red Riding Hood* in 2016 that was staged as part of the Out of the Box children's festival at Queensland Performing Arts Centre. Making that production was an exciting process because the choreographer, Lucas Jervies, was keen on not telling the traditional version of the story. Lucas wanted to position Little Red as a strong and powerful role model for children, particularly young girls. This meant Lucas and I spent a lot of time reading other versions of the story and repositioning the character of the Grandmother. Ultimately, in our version of the story Little Red became a superhero who learnt her power from another superhero in her life — her Grandmother.



# Queensland Ballet

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This Production Notes for the Classroom was developed in collaboration with Queensland Ballet's Education Ambassadors Melanie Peters and Megan Anderson.

