

The Fall of Love

Written by Rosharna Femia

Before Nightfall is a significant work in the hearts of Artistic Director Aurélien Scannella and Artistic Associate Sandy Delasalle, having first performed the work in 1994 with Deutsche Oper am Rhein where the couple first met and were dancing at the time. Nils Christe and his wife Annegien Sneepe came to restage the work with the company. It was the first time working with Christe for Aurélien and the second for Sandy.

Aurélien had just joined the company and this was the first work they performed alongside each other, and where Sandy admits to first noticing the talented, attractive dancer who would become her husband. They both enjoyed sharing the stage together but didn't have the opportunity to dance together in this production.

Sandy had previously been understudy for *Before Nightfall* in Switzerland with Basler Ballet at the age of 17. She was thrilled to learn such a technically challenging role which was usually only given to Principal dancers. The choreography demanded strength and stamina and has many complex pas de deux. "I had just joined the company [Basler Ballet] and enjoyed the challenge of becoming stronger and more conditioned to physically perform the work," she said. When Sandy eventually performed the work on stage as a Principal dancer, she described it as a dream come true. "I still remember all the steps, which is strange, but I guess when you fall in love with a work you never forget the choreography."

Aurélien and Sandy each connect deeply with the movement and choreography of *Before Nightfall*. "It is incredible when a choreographer is able to match the strength and subtleties of the music, and once you find that place as a performer it is very rewarding," Sandy said. They wanted to share their extraordinary experience with the dancers of West Australian Ballet, and give them the experience of working with Nils Christe as they had, and to perform his highly acclaimed masterwork. "I remember vividly, the moment on stage before the curtain rises where you all get to start together, and you know it is going to be difficult, but extremely rewarding, I hope they can share in the same joy. It was an empowering experience."

Principal Rehearsal Director & Artistic Associate Sandy Delasalle with Nils Christe in rehearsals. (Right) Sandy Delasalle performing *Before Nightfall* in 1994.

