

Shona McCullagh –Biography

MNZM, NZ Arts Foundation Laureate, Westpac/Fairfax Woman of Influence (Arts 2014), Hynds Creative Entrepreneur of the Year (2015)



Image: John McDermott

One of New Zealand's outstanding cross platform artists, arts business developers and co-founder of The New Zealand Dance Company, Shona McCullagh is an innovative choreographer and producer for dance, theatre and film. She is also a director, dance filmmaker, teacher and interactive installation artist.

A Distinguished Graduate from the New Zealand School of Dance, Shona was a dancer with Sydney based company Darc Swan in 1984, subsequently joining Limbs Dance Company, where she was a dancer, rehearsal director and choreographer from 1985 to 1988. In 1987, Shona performed with Douglas Wright & Dancers in New York, was a founding member of the NZ based Douglas Wright Dance Company and became its Associate Director in 1991, touring to the London Dance Umbrella and the Holland Dance Festival.

As a choreographer over the last 35 years she has created works ranging from short pieces to full length works, often working with NZ composers for companies such as Limbs, Footnote, Douglas Wright Dance Company, The Royal New Zealand Ballet, Southern Lights, tertiary institutes and her own company The Human Garden, which was established in 1992 and continued until 2007.

Shona has a long history of collaboration with other art forms, creating extensive work for theatre, television and film, including sequences for *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring* and *King Kong*. Her work for theatre has seen her creating choreography for Nightsong Productions, The Watershed Theatre, the NZ Actors Company and Auckland Theatre Company's *Equus*, *Sweet Charity*, *Cabaret*, *Chicago* and *Lysistrata*. Her work *Rotunda* for NZDC resulted in a tour to the Holland Dance Festival and a nine centre Australasian tour of the work, performing with live brass bands including a first ever collaboration between the military forces and contemporary dance with the NZ Army Band touring with the Company.

Shona has developed an international reputation as an award-winning and innovative filmmaker with all of her films being screened at the prestigious Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival in France. She established the Screendance course at UNITEC's Bachelor of Performing and Screen Arts and as a recipient of CNZ's 2004 Senior Choreographic Fellowship, Shona developed works integrating real-time interactive technology with live performance, resulting in a full-length work and a series of installations for Era New Horizons Festival in Poland, the Nelson Arts Festival, Splore and Taupo's Erupt Festival.

As founder and former director of The Human Agency, Shona has conceptualised and directed many major events involving dance as a central feature such as the Steinlager Rugby Awards, the Harcourts Annual Conference and as Head Choreographer for the globally broadcast 2011 Rugby World Cup Opening Ceremony. She has also encouraged the careers and livelihoods of hundreds of artists through sourcing work for them via the agency.

In 2007 Shona was an inaugural participant of the ART Venture Acceleration Programme for Creative Entrepreneurs, an initiative of the Arts Regional Trust. Attending this programme resulted in her decision to assist the growth of the NZ dance industry by founding The New Zealand Dance Company in 2011. She has led the Company as Chief Executive/Artistic Director, achieving multiple local, national and international tours and co-productions with artists, venues and festivals with performances at some of the world's most prestigious theatres.