The Crack Up places dancers within spectacular projected 3D stereoscopic imagery, created using the latest industry visual effects techniques. The audience wears 3D glasses, through which the projected imagery appears alternatively to envelop the dancers, co-existing with them in the performance volume, or to generate seemingly vast, cavernous landscapes for the dancers to inhabit. Through this process, The Crack Up explores the dramaturgical implications of placing dancers within an altered visual environment. Can the physical, visceral sense of camera movement in 3D bring projected imagery to kinaesthetic life? How can our perception of human performers be altered through juxtaposition with digital imagery? Can the very limitations of digital effects—their obviously inorganic and manufactured nature—be used to create a dramaturgy that highlights the organic fragility of the human body. Can the disorienting nature of 3D CG imagery be used to enhance the appreciation of the live performer's presence and action?
These are questions this performance project seeks to explore. The choreographic challenge of integrating dancers within 3D environments is to create performance that is no longer designed for a ‘normal’ three-dimensional space, but which must speak within an artificially constructed volume. Many contemporary choreographers tie the notion of dramaturgy more closely to generating ‘states’ of the body than to ‘choreographing’ its movements. In a 3D environment, ‘states’ of the body can not simply concern themselves with their own spatiality. They must also contend with an altered, augmented and perceptually distorted spatiality created by 3D projection, and one which the audience can perceive, but the performer can not. A different kind of dramaturgy is needed here – one that moves choreographic vision outwards from the centrality of the body to a more overarching view in which different ‘orders’ of viewing, to evoke philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s philosophical framework, coincide and collide. For the capabilities and affordances of the human dancer and a CG environment are not the same. A human performer has a physical structure, arms, legs, torso, etc., that behaves according to specific gravitational laws. A CG environment does not. CG physics are not limited to the ‘conventional’ laws of gravity, but are invented, coded into being, and subject only to the imagination of the animator.

How does one bring these worlds together? Working with Garry Stewart and Australian Dance Theatre on Garry’s newest and highly successful work, *Multiverse*, I was engaged with integrating performers within the inorganic, non-human context of quantum physics. Garry’s dancers were always connected within the vast 3D landscapes we created. *The Crack Up* explores the opposite hypothesis—that 3D is not an immersive environment, but fundamentally, at the perceptual and sensory level, an alienating one. 3D generates an altered spatiality in which objects overlap, but do not ‘feel’, perceptually, as if they are in the same space. *Multiverse* exploited this fact to evoke the unknowability of quantum physics. *The Crack Up* explores the
emotional and conceptual possibilities of this sensory paradox. In *The Crack Up*, the performers do not blend into the visual spectacle of a stereographic world. Dancers and images are juxtaposed, superimposed, in the same way that Fitzgerald’s competing and ultimately unsuccessful attempts to narrativise the causes of his break down do not merge into a seamless story.

*The Crack Up* is an essentially human story, told through dance within a lush, visually evocative environment of digitally created three-dimensional landscapes. Fitzgerald’s short story, for which the performance is named, feeds the imagery of the piece, which concerns the fragmentation of autobiographical identity. Fitzgerald’s story anticipates the technological fragmentation of identity not as a loss, but as a means of recreating identity from assembling a multiplicity of representations of self. Biography is now distributed, not just digitally though a multiplicity of tweets, blogs and Facebook pages, but also fundamentally, conceptually altered through the fragmenting effects and affects of digital media. Fitzgerald’s story, although in its time read as a straightforward confessional, similarly fragments and splinters when it needs, and then skillfully re-coheres in moments of contemporary story. Like Fitzgerald, the danced *Crack Up* asks ‘what is the end game of fragmentation?’ Is it a mental break down or a normal state to which one must adapt?

*The Crack Up* enlists the power of technology to explore that fragmentation. It is as if Fitzgerald’s story were told in tweets and snapchats, yet always anchored by the power of the dancing body. *The Crack Up* harnesses the visual power of stereoscopic 3D imagery to extend the dramaturgy of the work, and integrates transmedia elements that deliver additional resources to audiences, such as images or texts accessible during the performance, which both enact and critique the digitally mediated fragmentation of experience.
The digital technology used in this work raises the possibility that a performer could be a live performer, a motion captured avatar that ‘dances’ material already recorded, and/or an abstract image or form that dances ‘with’ or sometimes in juxtaposition to, live performers. I use motion capture choreographically, capturing movements from the work and mapping that movement onto CG characters who literally ‘dance’ in mid-air. This allows me to create dance that amplifies the nuance of the performer’s movement by inscribing it on oversized, delicately constructed CG ‘figures’ that can be seen in ways that are not possible in a ‘real-space’ environment.

*The Crack Up* is an attempt to reach towards a new approach to creating and viewing dance. The concept of ‘back story’ is notoriously difficult to convey in dance, which is primarily an artform of the body and the body’s experience, and hence always, in some form, of the present. *The Crack Up* takes a new approach, asking to what extent real-time on-device content can be integrated within a performance to provide a wider conceptual and perceptual context for the work. Just as many of us are now accustomed to browsing our phones and tablets in front of the television, this work looks at what it might mean to bring that quality of browsing and of following one’s own interest, in ways that might or might not be directly related to what one is ostensibly watching, to a live performance context. Can we create the conditions through which audiences can construct their own narrative, imagistic and conceptual pathways through a live performance work, using the power of digital media to enable a digitally expanded experience of a dance work? If we can create this unique experience of simultaneous immediacy with an unfolding stage work, and with one’s own thoughts, augmented and prompted through personalized, browsable transmedia, then dance itself can be significantly expanded as artform and as an experience.

Making this shift requires a change in the way we view dance. Can we open our vision beyond the body itself to place dance within a wider sensory and conceptual context? Can we, as Fitzgerald asks, hold two opposing things in the mind at once – the emotional power of the body and the wider context within which it acts?

*The Crack Up* explores the choreographic challenges and opportunities that the ability to augment performance with 3D and smart phone/device imagery invoke. The aim is a work that is not explicitly directed towards contemporary dance conventions and trajectories, or even necessarily towards contemporary dance itself, but rather towards what expansions and augmentations might be possible for dance within a wider digital culture.