



*Thursday's
Fictions*

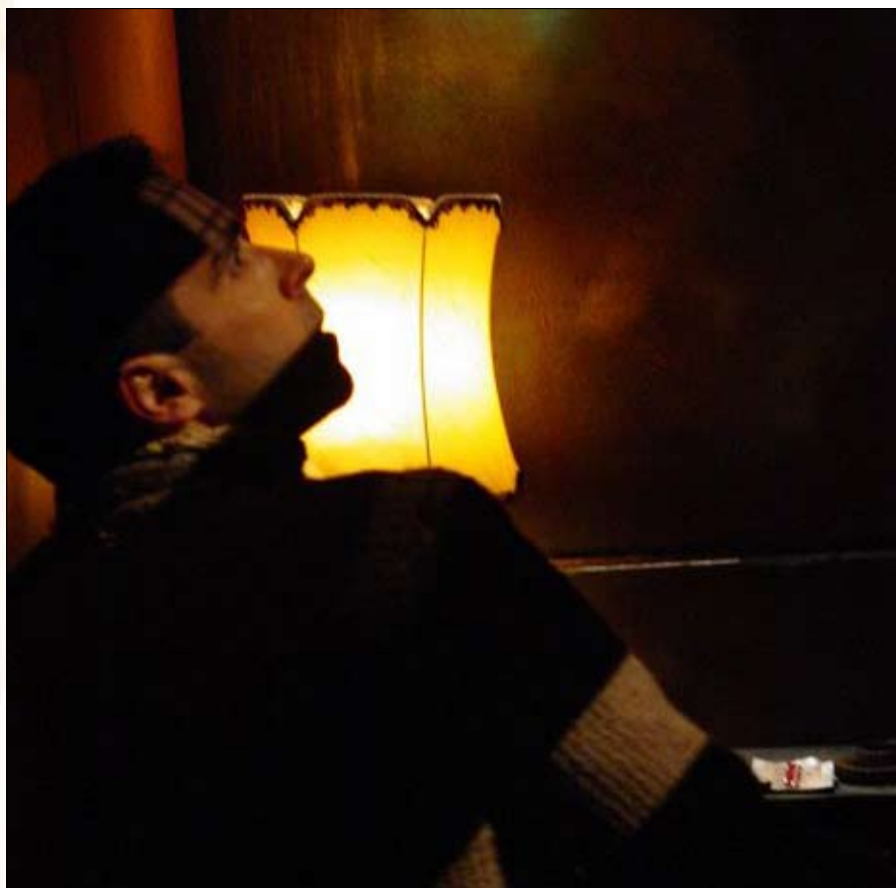
A **STUDYGUIDE** BY KATY MARRINER



www.metromagazine.com.au



www.theeducationshop.com.au



Clockwise from top left: Richard James Allen as Wednesday, looks up the stairs when he hears a sound at the beginning of the film. Close up, Richard James Allen as Wednesday in the 'Now' dance. Linda Ridgway, Richard James Allen and Amitie Skye Merrey, trio in the 'Now' dance scene. All photographs by Matthew Aberline. Copyright © The Physical TV Company Pty Ltd.

This study guide to accompany *Thursday's Fictions*, a film by The Physical TV Company, has been written for middle and senior secondary students. It provides information and suggestions for learning activities in Dance, English and Media.

About the Filmmakers

The Physical TV Company

The Physical TV Company is a multi-award-winning and critically acclaimed leader in the production and distribution of dance on screen. Unbound by conventions the company explores original ideas and tells imaginative stories within and across the media of film, dance and literature.

Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman are co-artistic directors of The Physical TV Company. They have worked internationally as film and video produc-

ers and artistic directors of dance companies over the last twenty years. Prior to forming the Physical TV Company, Allen and Pearlman were Artistic Directors of Tasdance, the state dance company of Tasmania, for two years, producing television shows, stage shows, tours throughout Tasmania and to The Kitchen in New York City, schools tours, festivals and outdoor events. Before that they co-directed the New York and Sydney-based *That Was Fast*, a dance, poetry, film and video company which toured to over one hundred venues on three continents, including many of the cutting edge venues for new dance in Great Britain, Holland, Germany, the USA, and

Australia.

Thursday's Fictions was produced by Pearlman and directed and choreographed by Allen. The screenplay was written by Allen and Pearlman.

About the Film

In a world where people only live for the length of a day, Thursday is running out of time. When Thursday finds out that her twenty-four hours are almost up and that she is going to be reincarnated as Tuesday, she tries to cheat the cycle. Thursday packs her belongings into a trunk so that she will be able to continue



Clockwise from the top left: Emma Canalese as Saturday investigating Friday's suicide in the "Saturday & Sunday" scene. Linda Ridgway in a quiet, floating moment in the middle of the 'Now' dance scene. Ben Hurley as Sunday in a tree overlooking the Mondays' funeral parlour in 'Mondays'. High angle shot of the dances spinning, at the climax of the 'Now' dance scene. All photographs by Simon Chapman. Copyright © The Physical TV Company Pty Ltd.

her work when she returns in her next life. Her actions unleash terrible beauty and turmoil. When the other days of the week discover Thursday's trunk, they grapple with the passion, beauty, dreams and nightmares which it contains.

Thursday's Fictions is a post-modern hybrid film in which dance, music, drama and cinematography are blended together to create a work of art. The world of *Thursday's Fictions* is epic and intense. Richard James Allen likens the film to an opera given its flamboyant pageant of colour and texture, its exploration of grand themes and larger than life performances. The drama in *Thursday's Fictions* functions like recitative and the dance is comparable to aria.

Thursday's Fictions is based on Allen's book of the same title, which as nominated for the Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry at the New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards..

Using *Thursday's Fictions* in the classroom

Teachers may select from the following activities to support students' viewing and close analysis of *Thursday's Fictions*.

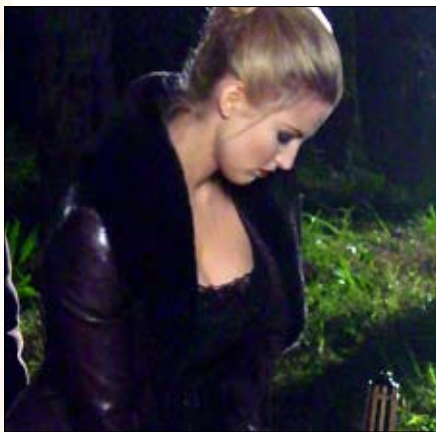
Before viewing the film

- How do you usually spend twenty-four hours?
- Compile a list of adages about time. Discuss the implications of these adages. Examples include:
 - » Seize the day.
 - » Today is the first day of the rest of your life.
 - » Time waits for no man.
 - » Live every day as if it is your last.
 - » You can't take it with you.
- View the trailer for *Thursday's Fictions* at <http://www.thursdaysfictions.com> What does the trailer tell you about the film?
- Examine the promotional poster for

Thursday's Fictions. How does it position a potential audience?

After viewing the film

- What expectations did you bring to the film? Were any of these expectations challenged?
- Why have the filmmakers named the film *Thursday's Fictions*?
- What are the central concerns of the film? How do you know?
- Revisit the list of adages about time and consider which adages best reflect the concerns of *Thursday's Fictions*.
- Is *Thursday's Fictions* a dance film?
- As a class, discuss the challenges of creating a film that is an amalgam of dance, music and drama.
- What is the role of a film like *Thursday's Fictions*?
- Words such as provocative, fascinating, challenging, thoughtful, exciting, entertaining and original have been used to describe *Thursday's Fictions*.



Clockwise from the top left: Emma Canalese as Saturday finally captures Thursday reincarnated as Tuesday in the 'Tuesday' scene. Terri Herlings as one Thursday's dances in the 'Thursday' scene. Natasha Farrow as Thursday smiles in anticipation into her trunk as she opens it to show its contents to Friday, in the 'Thursday' scene. Hala Sbat as Tuesday, dreaming of freedom in the 'Tuesday' scene: "Thank God in this time this torture can't go on much longer. Only till tomorrow. Till Wednesday. And yet, even if I only have five minutes left till midnight, it is an eternity for my floating mind." Kerry Casey as Friday opening the door to Thursday in the 'Thursday' scene. All photographs by Matthew Aberline. Copyright © The Physical TV Company Pty Ltd.

What adjectives would you use to describe the film? Compile a list of vocabulary that you can use in your responses to other activities.

Key Scenes

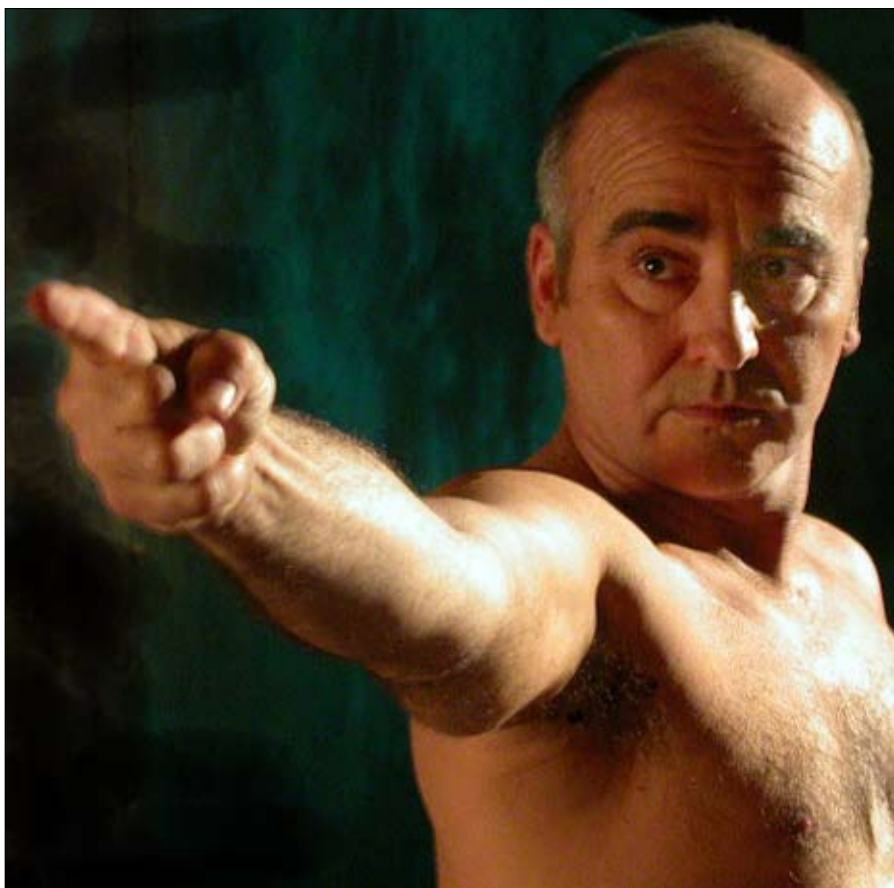
- Working with a partner, write a plot synopsis for *Thursday's Fictions*.
- Allow students to work as individuals or in small groups to create an analysis of the plot, portrayal of character(s), production values and the purpose of a key scene of *Thursday's Fictions*.
 - » Scene 1: Wednesday
 - » Scene 2: Thursday
 - » Scene 3: Friday
 - » Scene 4: Saturday & Sunday
 - » Scene 5: The Mondays
 - » Scene 6: Tuesday
 - » Scene 7: Wednesday
 - Scene 8: Now

Themes

- Identity
- Time
- Death
- Reincarnation
- Creativity
- Hope
- Loss
- What does *Thursday's Fictions* tell us about each of these themes? Ask students to endorse their responses with specific evidence from the film.
- Create an A3 collage of words and images that offers a response to a theme explored in *Thursday's Fictions*. Use these responses to compose a class mural that reveals the concerns of the film.
- Select one of the themes explored by *Thursday's Fictions* and work with other students to develop a multimedia presentation offering your group's stories about this theme.

Characters

- Wednesday
 - Thursday
 - Friday
 - Saturday
 - Sunday
 - Monday 1
 - Monday 2
 - Monday 3
 - Tuesday
 - Thursday's Dances
 - Dog Guards
 - Glockenspiel Figures
 - Discuss the portrayal of each character.
 - 'I am Saturday. You need my help.' 'That trunk you're opening ... that trunk the Mondays sent you ... There's been a mistake. You'd better give the trunk to me. I'll clear things up.'
- Does Wednesday really need Saturday's help?

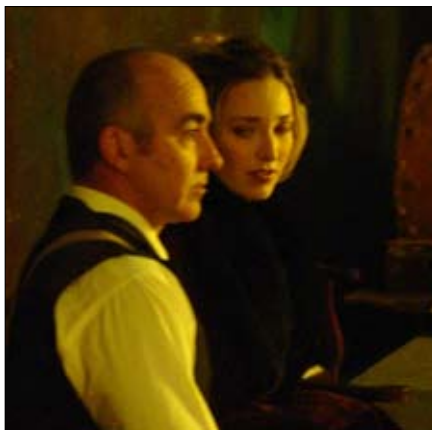
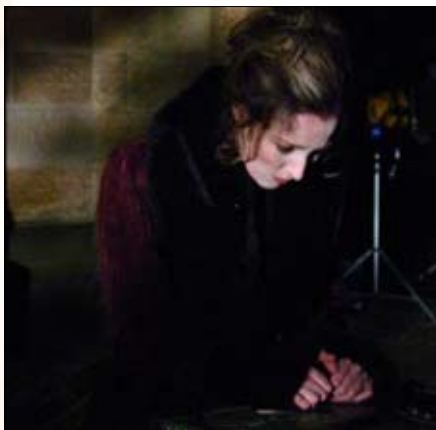


Clockwise from the top left: Natasha Farrow as Thursday, filled with fear and hope outside Friday's door at the beginning of the 'Thursday' scene. Photograph by Simon Chapman. Kerry Casey as Friday's Left Brain berating his Right Brain, in the 'Friday' scene. Photograph by Sarah-May Ryan. Gareth Rickards and Robert Field as Dog Guards in silhouette, production still, 'Tuesday' scene. Photograph by Matthew Aberline. All photographs copyright © The Physical TV Company Pty Ltd.

- 'Then hear the chronicle of a trunk full of dances, passing through an anomalous time, where characters named after days of the week live only for the length of a day; a story whose forms keep changing from day to day like the weather. It is a cautionary tale and I caution you with it.' Why does Saturday claim that the story of Thursday's Fictions is a cautionary tale?
- 'There's a lot to be said for dying. There are all kinds of advantages. You should try it sometime.'
- Does Thursday want to die?
 'You can make my dances live on. It's my gift to you. Take these dances and bury them with me, so I have a chance of picking them up again next time around.'
 Thursday's knowledge of her reincarnation prompts her to give her trunk to Friday. Why does Thursday place her trust in Friday?
 Is it reasonable that Thursday doesn't want to lose all that she has

- achieved?
- 'I bring you dancing trinkets, mudras like little jewels, knick-knacks in every tongue, sparkling tour jetées, practical and philosophical concepts useful in the home and out in the big narrow world, an image for every occasion, simple and helpful resolutions of what it's all about.
 Big answers to the small questions, Small answers to the big questions, Anything your mind and heart desire...
 I bring you my fictions, my storehouse of fictions...'
 What is inside Thursday's trunk?
 Use the form of a letter or a diary entry to convey Thursday's thoughts and feelings.
- Saturday: 'For Friday, the dancers became a string of landmines rather than a string of pearls. Thursday left Friday fighting a rear guard action against reality.'
 Saturday: 'Sunday discovered that Friday had left the trunk with those

- triplets ... those triplets who run the First Day of the Week Funeral Home.'
- Monday 3: 'Who would want to be buried with a bunch of old dances, Monday?'
 Monday 2: 'Well, we can't just throw them away, Monday. You've got to observe a dying person's last wish.'
 Saturday: 'Hand over those dances, Monday, Monday and Monday. They're evidence in an eternity crime! They'll never get out of your head! They'll haunt you forever!'
 Tuesday: 'It was my own grave I was digging up! What have you done with my dances?'
 Thursday's dances and what happens to them are the central issue of Thursday's Fictions. The dances represent the range of human emotion and experience.
 How do the other days of the week respond to Thursday's fictions?
- 'While she was here, between the darkness and the darkness, my mother, Thursday, wanted to burn



Clockwise from the top left: Natasha Farrow preparing for a take as Thursday, production still, 'Thursday' scene. Photograph by Matthew Aberline. Natasha Farrow as Thursday looks at Kerry Casey as Friday, observing his response to her dances, halfway through the 'Thursday' dance scene. Photograph by Matthew Aberline. Tammi Leigh Gissell as one of the dances in the 'Now' scene. Photograph by Sarah-May Ryan. Gareth Rickards and Robert Field as Dog Guards, resting after pulling Saturday's sulky at the beginning of the 'Saturday & Sunday' scene. Photograph by Matthew Aberline. Natasha Farrow as Thursday observes in delight Kerry Casey as Friday's amazement at seeing the firefly-like sparks that have emerged from her trunk. Photograph by Simon Chapman. All photographs copyright © The Physical TV Company Pty Ltd.

with a light so bright that its embers would still be glowing after she had crumbled into night.

'I will be the carriage, the courier for her dances, I will be the vehicle for the passage of the dances, a prism for the light of the dances, dances which are themselves only vehicles for the light.'

What does Wednesday decide to do?

Settings

The settings of *Thursday's Fictions* draw on the romanticism of the Victorian era. Consider the use of these settings and explain what each setting contributes to the telling of story. How do the settings reflect the themes of *Thursday's Fictions*?

Imagery and Symbolism

In *Thursday's Fictions*, time is the key. Each character has their own link to time – an hourglass, a glockenspiel, a sundial

– to exemplify their slavery to its passing.

- What are the significant images of *Thursday's Fictions*?
- What recurring visual images do the filmmakers use? What ideas do these images reinforce?
- What images establish Thursday's determination and desperation?
- What images establish Saturday's power and malevolence?
- How do images work in a symbolic way to reveal the limitations of time?
- As a class, discuss the use of symbols to tell the story, portray characters and establish the concerns of *Thursday's Fictions*.

Genre

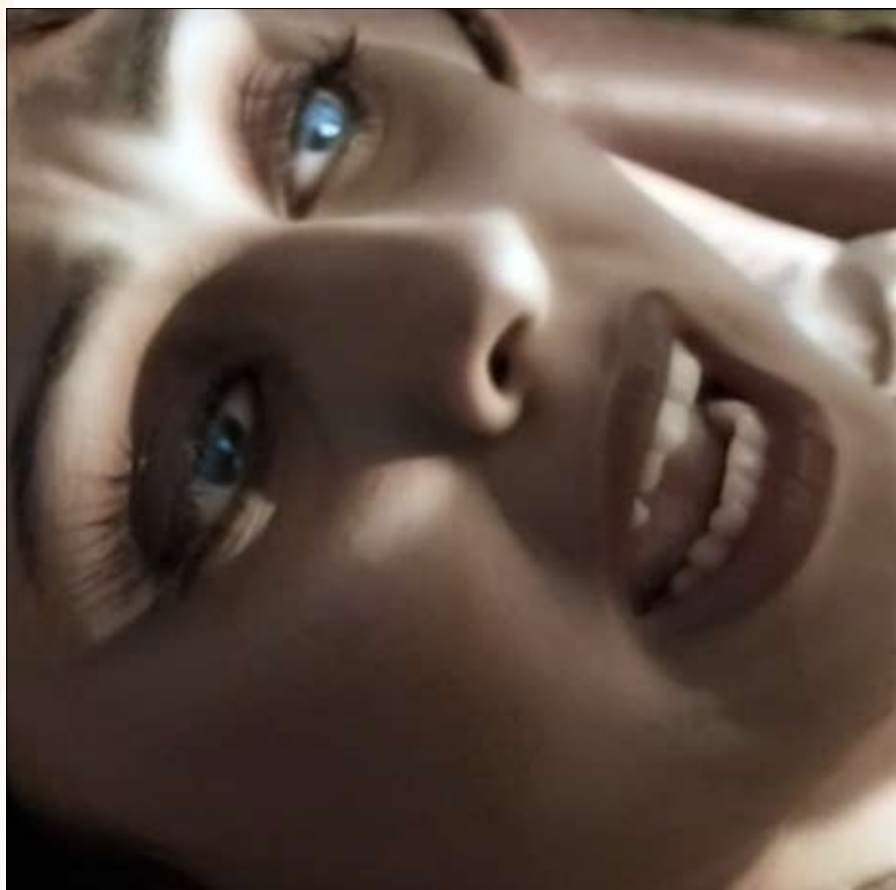
- *Thursday's Fictions* is regarded as a dance film. Find out more about this type of cinema. Begin your research by visiting <http://www.physicaltv.com.au>
- Why do you think *Thursday's Fictions*

is labelled as 'surreal dance fantasy'? Do you prefer this or 'a dance noir fantasy'?

- *Thursday's Fictions* has also been described as 'gothic'. What is your understanding of this term? Do you agree with such a description?

Choreography and Performance

- Describe the dance styles that are evident in *Thursday's Fictions*.
- Thursday's fictions dance in Scene 2 (Thursday) and Scene 8 (Now).
- Working in small groups and then as a class, discuss the ways in which ideas are communicated choreographically and through performance skills in these dance works.
- Continue this discussion by completing a detailed description of the form of these dance works. How was the dance structured? Refer to the use of motifs, phrasing, the overall construction of the movement sections, the use of floor patterns and the



Clockwise from the top left: Hala Sbat as Tuesday remembering her past identity as Thursday, in the 'Tuesday' scene. Photograph by Simon Chapman. Emma Canalese as Saturday dancing around the body of Kerry Casey as Friday, with Ben Hurley as Sunday looking on from behind, in the 'Saturday & Sunday' scene.

musical structure. Do you think the form effectively communicated the expressive intention? Describe the performance environment. Did any parts of the dance interact with the performance environment to create structure in the dance?

- Finalize this task by compiling an analysis of how technical and production aspects including performance space, camera angles, the use of editing processes, lighting, sets, properties, costuming and make-up communicate the choreographer's expressive intention in these dance sequences.
- Choose a dance work from *Thursday's Fictions* and complete an analysis of body actions including:
 - » Gesture
 - » Locomotion
 - » Elevation
 - » Falling
 - » Turning
 - » Stillness
- Choreographic devices such as ab-

straction, repetition, motif, addition, accumulation, inversion, distortion, and retrograde are used by choreographers to create expressive movement. Use a table to record when these devices are employed in the dance works of *Thursday's Fictions*. Incorporate a definition of each choreographic device into the table.

Production Values

- Production values such as camera work, framing, editing, lighting, set design, costumes, makeup, props and sound contribute to the telling of *Thursday's Fictions*. Make sure you know what each of these terms means. What do you notice about each of these production values in *Thursday's Fictions*? Work in small groups and record your ideas in a table.
- What does the opening sequence reveal about the subject of *Thursday's Fictions* and the filmmakers' ap-

proach to the subject? What expectations does the opening sequence create? How are you positioned as a viewer?

- Watch *Thursday's Fictions* again and listen to the soundtrack. What sounds are used to tell the story? Why?
- The music of *Thursday's Fictions* needed to be rich and complex in order to convey the infinite variances in the emotional arc of the story. Parts of the score explode with colour and life, while other sections alienate and disturb. The most important musical works are *The Song of the Fictions*, which can be heard in full during Scene 2 and then reprised in Scene 6, and *The Ascension Dance* in Scene 8.
- How does music contribute to the telling of the story? Discuss the way music establishes the mood and tone for each scene.
- Explain the filmmakers' use of colour in *Thursday's Fictions*.

- How does costume design reveal the nature of each day of the week?
- Why do you think the filmmakers decided that some of Thursday's Dances would be topless? Provide students with background information about the tradition of the female form as a symbol of beauty in Western Art.
- Watch the closing sequence of *Thursday's Fictions*. What is the filmmakers' intention and how is this intention achieved?

Analytic Responses

These tasks may be presented as a written, oral, annotated visual or multimedia report.

- 'Seven dances, seven days, seven musical landscapes.' Is this an apt description of *Thursday's Fictions*?
 - 'A sweeping and sensual cinematic experience of music, dance and surreal fantasy.' Is this a valid assessment of *Thursday's Fictions*?
 - '*Thursday's Fictions* is a film about the nature, power and beauty of dance.' Discuss.
 - '*Thursday's Fictions* is visually impressive.' Do you agree?
 - Write a review of *Thursday's Fictions*. Spend some time researching the qualities of a review before you begin. You will need to decide on the type of publication that will feature your review. Are you writing for the arts pages of a broadsheet newspaper or for a magazine read by people who are interested in dance? Will your review appear in a journal devoted to film? Use vocabulary and adopt a tone that best suits the publication that you have chosen. Download an appropriate image from the Internet to include in your review. Ask your teacher to act as your editor and don't forget to devise an attention demanding title for your review. Email your review to The Physical TV Company (PhysicalTV@bigpond.com), including your and your parents' permission to have it published, and it may be selected to appear on *Thursday's Fictions* website.
- your group dance work on a piece of prose or poetry. Submit a storyboard of your idea and write a brief synopsis of your expressive intention. Film your performance and create a PowerPoint analysis of your dance work.

Going Further

- Visit the *Thursday's Fictions* website: <http://www.thursdaysfictions.com>
- Read the reviews of *Thursday's Fictions* at <http://www.thursdaysfictions.com> Do you agree with these appraisals of the film?
- View the trailer for The Physical TV Company at www.physicaltv.com.au. What does it tell you about the philosophy of the company and their other productions?
- Explore ideas about dance film and the art of editing, in articles and reviews by Dr Karen Pearlman, including some which use *Thursday's Fictions* as a case study. See: http://www.physicaltv.com.au/ReviewsAndArticlesByDrKarenPearlman_539_112_2_3_0.html
- Dr Karen Pearlman's paper, "Editing as a Form of Choreography", presented at the inaugural Screendance: The State of the Art Conference at the American Dance Festival in 2006, can also be downloaded (for free) from CAPTURE, the UK's strategic agency for dance and moving image: www.capturenet.org.uk, as part of CAPTURE Papers, a collection of licensed articles, essays and papers relevant to the artistic practice, critique and exhibition of dance and moving image.
- Look out for Dr Karen Pearlman book *Cutting Rhythms, Shaping the Film Edit*, to be published by Focal Press in the USA in 2009.
- Read the reviews of *Thursday's Fictions* at
- See if your library or local bookstore has the book on which the film was based - *Thursday's Fictions* by Dr Richard James Allen (Five Islands Press, Wollongong, 1999). How are the book and the film similar and how are they different? In the film, Thursday wants to preserve her dances. In the book, what does she want Friday to bury so she can dig up and keep working on in her next life?
- Before it was published as a book and before it was made into a film,
- *Thursday's Fictions* had a stage production in Tasmania presented by Tasdance/That Was Fast (1995). Excerpts from the performance text, along with photos and an artistic statement, are published in Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman (eds), *Performing the Unnameable: An Anthology of Australian Performance Texts* (Currency Press and RealTime, Sydney, 1999). The multi-media stage production was described by a reviewer in the these terms: "What a fascinating, challenging, thoughtful, exciting and confrontingly entertaining piece of creativity this unusual presentation is...a mind-blowing mix of dance, drama, performance poetry, a radio play and music." What approach was taken in the stage production? How would you compare this to the film?
- For further information on *Performing the Unnameable*, visit: <http://www.artmedia.com.au/performancecripts.htm>
- To order the anthology, go to: <http://www.currency.com.au/search.aspx?q=performing+the+unnameable>
- *Thursday's Fictions* is the story of a woman who tries to cheat the cycle of reincarnation to get eternal life. Cheating the confines of any single artform, this project about reincarnation, which has already transmigrated from the page to the stage to the screen, next brings the spiritual and the artistic to the online 3D immersive environment of *Second Life*. There are questions in the film and the book which deal with themes of reincarnation and the nature of our universe. Now you can enter the immersive 3D world of *Thursday's Fictions in Second Life* to explore the answers to these questions with other friends in *Second Life*.
- To enter the world of *Thursday's Fictions in Second Life* follow these steps: 1) If you have not used *Second Life* before, go to <http://secondlife.com/> and click on 'Join Now' - it takes 5 minutes. (Note: Requires a fast computer with broadband). 2) Once you have downloaded the *Second Life* software, then log on. 3) After you have finished orientation click on "Search", choose iPlaces tab. Type and select 'Thursday's Fictions'. Select: 'Teleport'. Alternatively,

Creating and Performing

- Working in a small group, create and perform your own dance work. Base

click on 'Map'. Search: 'Esperance'. Select: 'Teleport'. Locate the billboard, click on 'Thursday's Fictions in Second Life'. From 4pm, July 29th, 2007, *Thursday's Fictions in Second Life* will be located above Esperance, the Australian Film Television and Radio School Island.

- What is your experience in this online 3D immersive environment? *Thursday's Fictions in Second Life* is a unique and unprecedented cross artform collaboration. It combines an historical sweep of media – from the

more traditional artforms of poetry, dance and music - to the quintessentially 20th century medium of cinema to the evolving 21st century artform of the online digital immersive world.

The creators suggest that, 'When you read a book, you imagine the world.

- When you watch a film, you see and hear the world. When you visit an online 3D immersive environment, you *enter* the world. You feel what it's like to be one of the characters, to be inside the story. And you can share that experience with your friends.'

Compare your experiences of *Thursday's Fictions* across the different artistic media and delivery platforms.

References

- Victoria Curriculum and Assessment Authority, *Dance Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design*, VCAA, Victoria, 2006.

Katy Marriner



This study guide was produced by **ATOM** (©ATOM)
editor@atom.org.au

For more information on **SCREEN EDUCATION**
magazine or to download other free study guides visit
www.metromagazine.com.au

For hundreds of articles on Film as Text, Screen
Literacy, Multiliteracy and Media Studies, visit
www.theeducationshop.com.au

Notice: An educational institution may make copies of all or part of this Study Guide, provided that it only makes and uses copies as reasonably required for its own educational, non-commercial, classroom purposes and does not sell or lend such copies.

