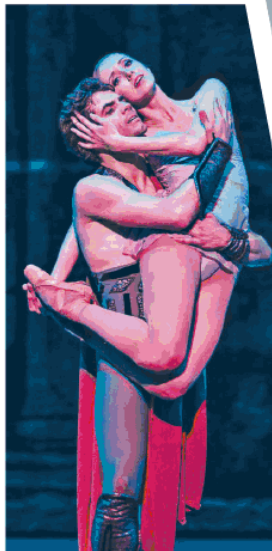




Phil Brown

CULTURE CLUB



DANCE WITH ME: Igor Tsvirko and Margarita Shrayner in the Bolshoi Ballet's *Spartacus*; Li Cunxin; Natalie Portman in *Black Swan*.

“My only experience of [ballet] was watching comedian Paul Hogan do *The Nutcracker*”

I didn't expect to become a ballet fan. It just kind of crept up on me. Nowadays I love nothing better than a night at the ballet and I'm hoping I will be able to experience one again sooner rather than later.

Growing up I wasn't that interested in ballet. Certainly as a teenager it wasn't on my radar. In the macho surfer culture of the Gold Coast in the 1970s, ballet just wasn't on the agenda. My only experience of it back then was watching comedian Paul Hogan do *The Nutcracker*. Talk about culture.

When I started my career in arts journalism in Rockhampton in the early 1980s I did get to see some dance at the Pilbeam Theatre and I quite enjoyed it. When I came to work in Brisbane later in the 1980s, I started going to the ballet occasionally and more regularly when I got married. My wife, Sandra, learnt ballet in Townsville from Ann Roberts, a famous teacher who has trained generations of dancers. Sandra was immersed in the ballet scene so we went to the ballet more often and I got to quite like

it even though I have never fully grasped the technicalities. This is why I always grill her after a ballet, since I may have missed some of the technical nuances.

What I love about ballet is the pure aesthetic of a performance. Classical ballet is one of the highest art forms and usually it has the most gorgeous music by the likes of Tchaikovsky or Prokofiev, among others. Some ballet music transports you to another plane. The music of *Swan Lake*, for example or, one of my recent favourites, the music from the ballet *Spartacus* by Aram Khachaturian.

One passage from his score is one of the most beautiful pieces of music ever written for my money. I refer to the *Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia*, which will sound familiar to people for a certain age as the theme song from the British TV *The Onedin Line*.

As well as hearing it played by the Queensland Symphony Orchestra when the Bolshoi Ballet performed that ballet here last year, I was lucky enough to hear it in the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow early last year while on assignment covering the

Bolshoi before their Brisbane visit. Going backstage in Moscow was an incredible experience – interviewing the dancers and seeing what they get up to in the wings. At a matinee of *Spartacus* the boys were all sword fighting and mucking around, which surprised me. Then when their moment came they rushed on stage.

I love all that behind-the-scenes stuff and if you want to see the good, the bad and the ugly of ballet, watch the 2015 documentary *Bolshoi Babylon*, which is quite an eye-opener.

Ballet can be as dramatic offstage as on. Another case in point, is the 2010 thriller *Black Swan* starring Natalie Portman, which shows how dramatic things can get in real life. It's fiction of course but it makes a point.

I'm lucky enough to go behind the scenes with Queensland Ballet when they are preparing productions and I have got to know artistic director Li Cunxin quite well. The world of ballet offers some great backstories but his is possibly the best. He told it in his memoir *Mao's Last Dancer* which was also made into a Hollywood film directed by Bruce Beresford.

Ballet is a never-ending story and as much as I enjoy watching it online I really can't wait for the season so rudely interrupted by COVID-19 to begin again. It's Queensland Ballet's 60th anniversary year and we were just about to enjoy their anniversary gala before things went awry. That has been rescheduled for October and I'm sure it will be worth the wait.

THE CUT

Eat Cocoa Box

cocoabox.com.au
Taste some of the country's best chocolate with gift boxes of artisan-made blocks delivered to your door. Available as a one-off buy or monthly subscription, you can choose from a dark, milk, mixed or special isolation box from \$37.50.

ANOOSKA TUCKER-EVANS



Watch Ancient Aliens

Foxtel/History Channel

If, like me, you believe that the truth is out there you'll love this show about how extraterrestrials have visited us for millennia and may have even created us. This show is as nutty as hell but I love it.

PHIL BROWN



Do Knit your own Dog

Sally Muir and Joanna Osborne, Collins and Brown, \$17

If you wish you had your own pet in isolation but can't be bothered with the upkeep, then try knitting your own. Whippets, collies, pugs or dachshunds ... make the pet of your dreams.

ALISON WALSH



Eat Apricot jam, feta and thyme toastie

Joedy's, New Farm

Toasties don't get more gourmet than the sensational version at recently opened Brisbane cafe Joedy's. Filled with apricot jam, dill-infused feta and thyme, it's like eating all the best bits from a cheese board.

ANOOSKA TUCKER-EVANS



Read Daddy Cool

Darleen Bungey

Allen&Unwin, \$33

Unravelling who her father really was is the mission of biographer Bungey, sister of Pulitzer-winning author Geraldine Brooks. Their father, a famous US singer, fought for Australia in WWII, then settled in Sydney.

ALISON WALSH



Bargain corner

ANOOSKA TUCKER-EVANS

In the past six weeks I've probably eaten more takeaway than I would have in the past six years.

Pre-COVID closures, if I wasn't at home tossing together healthy meals in a vain attempt to not become the Michelin Man's body double, I'd be eating out at restaurants and cafes for work.

Takeaway simply didn't fit into my week or my calorie intake if I was to have a future sans heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure.

But with most eateries still only open for pick-up or delivery, my wheelie bin has been packed tighter with takeaway containers than a tween's bra is with tissues.

Just as new to the takeaway experience as I am is Nundah Corner Cafe and Bistro, owned by Lina Wang (below), in Brisbane's inner north.

After initially closing when coronavirus lockdowns kicked in, it reopened late last month for takeaway only, launching a value-packed breakfast and lunch menu, running from granola and vegan grills to apple pecan pancakes, avocado bruschetta and toasties. There are also meals for two which need to be ordered a day in advance, such as a roasted chicken with confit potatoes and salad or, perhaps, rolled pork belly with broccolini.

Offering unbeatable bang for your buck are their ever changing brunch specials, which on my visit include the option of one of four burgers, plus chips and any drink of your choice (including beer) for just \$17.90.

The classic beef burger features a soft, golden bun enveloping a chunky wagyu patty, sliced tomato, lettuce, melted cheese, pickles, red onion and lashings of barbecue sauce (pictured). It's an absolute ripper delivering a stream of juice that runs down your arms and a gleeful smile of sauce smeared across your face.

Also a cracker is the eggs benny (\$15.90) offering two perfectly poached eggs, crispy bacon, potato cakes, wilted spinach, cubes of squeaky haloumi, a bright but well-balanced pesto and a tarpaulin of zesty hollandaise sauce covering the lot. There's also the option to have this sans bacon, with just spinach, or with mushrooms or smoked salmon. It's a terrific version of the classic breakfast fare and if it's this good as a takeaway, I



can't wait to try it piping hot and delivered to my table at the cafe.

The drinks of choice in the specials include the bistro's full offering, stretching from Merlo coffee to smoothies and juices, milkshakes for only \$5.90, house-made sodas and the tropical Queensland frappe singing of ultra ripe mango. Soft drinks are also on offer and the beers include Corona, Peroni, 150 Lashes and Boags Light.

With so many people now doing it tough financially as a result of coronavirus lay-offs, Nundah Corner Cafe is coming to the rescue, serving up terrific value and great flavours which makes treating yourself easy.



Nundah Corner Cafe and Bistro

1208 Sandgate Rd,
Nundah
3148 2358
nundahcorner.com.au
Open seven days
7am-2.30pm
Orders over the phone
or online

VERDICT

Food 9
Ease of ordering 9
Value 9



If you like this, try ...
The Gunshop Cafe
53 Mollison St, West End
3844 2241

Anooska's picks

buy

Spoil yourself or someone you love with gorgeous boutique chocolates delivered to your door. Aussie company Cocoa Box creates packs of artisan chocolate blocks that can be bought as a one-off or a subscription so you can try new flavours each month. Includes a mixed dark and milk collection and a special isolation box. From \$37.50, cocoabox.com.au



try

The hottest new thing in Ready To Drinks (RTDs) is seltzer, a sparkling alcoholic beverage made from fermented rice. Leading the charge in the Aussie market is Quincy, delivering what tastes like a slightly less potent, fizzy sake. It comes in lime or passionfruit flavours for \$19.95 (4-pack) from Dan Murphy's, BWS and all leading independent liquor stores.



order

With bars still not set to reopen for weeks, you can now have your favourite bar come to you. Created by Campari Australia, the initiative enables drinkers to order cocktails from some of the best bars in the country and have them delivered or picked up. Queensland bars include Death and Taxes, and Cobbler. Visit shakennotbroken.camparigroup.com.au

