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Aaah spring, the whisper of new beginnings in the air, the first green shoots peeping out of the ground, the butterflies entwined mid-air, and the first performances of that most ritualistic of dances, The Magpie Dance.

Regular readers may recall I have spoken of this ancient ritual before, and of the fact that no one in the history of the world has ever, ever looked cool while being attacked by one of these black-and-white marauders. Now, as all Australians know, The Magpie Dance involves three main steps.

1. The raising of the head to the sky, accompanied by the lifting of the chin, and the wearing of an expression that says: "Wait! What is that sound? What is that ominous whirring? Is that what I think it is? What month is it? Dammit! WHAT MONTH IS IT? September? Oh my God, I'm too late ... BANG!

2. The hitting of yourself on your own head as you frantically try to ward off the attacking marauder, smacking yourself on the cheeks, across the forehead and on your ears, while simultaneously twitching and turning the rest of your body as if you have become trapped in a washing machine on spin cycle.

3. The walk/dance of shame when the attack is blessedly over and you now attempt to stroll casually along, pretending nothing has happened while blood drips down your face and small children point at you.

No, there is nothing remotely cool about The Magpie Dance, apart from, of course, the fact that the maggies themselves are just doing what any other parent would do when a stranger gets too close to their babies.

Other than that, no, nothing cool or remotely enjoyable about it – something I remembered the other day when I was walking along with Wilson the Wonderdog (absolutely useless in a magpie attack, or any other sort) and was suddenly, and without warning, hit from the left flank.

Thwack! Right in my ear. Thwack, a direct hit to the top of my head. Thwack. A left temple assault, and on and on, while Wilson just kept trotting along merrily, looking for another dog's poo to eat.

I immediately launched into The Magpie Dance's first position, which is, of course, to kick the feet out wildly in no discernible pattern, and wave the arms about madly in the air while sobbing uncontrollably.

I have no idea how long the attack lasted, all I know is that it was brutal and bloodying, and when it was over, I was a broken woman, but strangely accepting of my fate.

Look, I'm not saying I'm a masochist, but I am an Australian, and there is something quintessentially Australian about undergoing this ritual each spring.

It's as Australian as getting stung by a bluebottle in the surf, running through a bindi patch, or getting chased by a horsefly.



All of these, of course, come with their own special dance steps too.

I am particularly fond of The Getting Chased by A Horsefly Dance, with its accompanying, quite lovely, beach-towel flick – it's just like those rhythmic gymnastics girls with their ribbons.

Indeed, I have also spoken before of my belief that these particular dances be incorporated into public spectacles, such as the Olympics, or the more recent Commonwealth Games.

Forget that Michael Flatley *Lord of the Dance* nonsense, I want to see Todd McKenney *Lord of the Magpies*.

You know, I really think this idea has legs ... or wings.

At these huge events, how indicative of our great nation, how real, how very Australian would it be if we had a bunch of schoolchildren running around the stadium performing The Magpie Dance, The Bindi Patch Boogie, The Horsefly Two-Step, and last but not least, The I've Got Sunscreen In My Eye contemporary piece? There is something very Australian about these experiences – granted, none of them are pleasant, but they are ours.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm off to paint some eyes on top of my bike helmet, and you know what I'm thinking, don't you?

Costume!!!

Happy spring everyone.

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