

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

TALKING POINTE




WINTER 2024

The Australian Ballet acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



Front and back cover: Isobelle Dashwood and Davi Ramos. Photo Sally Kaack
Above: Isobelle Dashwood, *Jewels* (Balanchine) 2023. Photo Kate Longley



Contents Winter 2024

3

**Philanthropy Director's
welcome**

4

Company news

8

Originating Oscar®
Inside the wonderful
world of Wheeldon

14

Dancing queen
A trip down
memory lane with
Robyn Hendricks

18

Lifting us higher
2023 impact report

22

Dynamic duo
Meet our new
Philanthropy
Ambassadors

26

The changemakers
The team keeping our
dancers dancing,
for longer

28

Fresh faces
The newest artists in
the Corps de Ballet

34

The greatest joy
Jane Freudenstein and
the Foundation Board

36

An eternal love
Reflections from
supporter Emilia Cross

38

Ballet events



Principal Artist Benedicte Bemmet rehearsing *Oscar*® (Wheeldon) 2024
Photo Christopher Rodgers-Wilson

Welcome from the Philanthropy Director

Kenneth Watkins AM



“We are who we are *because of you.*”

Hot on the heels of our glittering 60th anniversary season and celebrations, Season 2024 is shaping up to be one to remember.

There's something for everyone this year. The repertoire is creatively rich and adventurous; the perfect platform for the dancers' artistic and technical prowess to shine, while demonstrating the scintillating direction in which David Hallberg is taking the company.

In March, as the curtain came down on our Melbourne season of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*[®], we said farewell (for now) to the State Theatre, our Victorian performance home of nearly 40 years, as it temporarily closes to begin refurbishment as part of Melbourne's Arts Precinct Transformation.

Of course, we are greatly looking forward to our return to the State Theatre in 2027, but we are also excited to explore the many creative and operational opportunities our residence at the Regent Theatre will present.

As someone who's been fortunate to call The Australian Ballet 'home' for 30 years now, experience reminds me that these periods of change are when the company takes its largest strides forward.

Our leaders have a precedent for making brave decisions that accelerate the position of the company financially, culturally and artistically. From purchasing the land to build our home in 1978, to presenting genre-defining, bespoke ballets like *The Merry Widow*, Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake* and *Kunstkamer*, we have honed our artistic identity and ensured our legacy.

In 2024 and beyond, you will see examples of innovation in action as we strive to continue creating first-class experiences in all we do. In the pioneering repertoire David curates to grow with us, in the versatile sets that are designed to shine on every stage, and – if you're in Melbourne – in the sensitive remodelling of the Regent Theatre to enhance the beauty of our art form.

Of international significance, the world premiere of *Oscar*[®], a groundbreaking new ballet bringing to life Oscar Wilde's extraordinary life and writings, is a perfect example of our commitment to innovation. Reuniting Christopher Wheeldon and Joby Talbot, the dream team behind *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*[®], *Oscar*[®] marks an important milestone in The Australian Ballet's history as Wheeldon's first full-length signature commission on the company.

Generously enabled by Lady Potter AC CMRI and The David Hallberg Fund for Artistic Aspiration, *Oscar*[®] is indicative of the international opportunities that are being awakened by the exciting direction David is taking us in and of the new frontiers we are exploring.

It brings me immense pride to be a part of the company at this energising time, and huge comfort to know that we are embraced by a growing community of supporters whose generosity allows us to be first-class on all fronts.

Thank you. We are who we are because of you, and our future shines even brighter with you by our side.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kenneth', written in a cursive style.

Kenneth Watkins AM
Philanthropy Director

Company news

There's an undeniable buzz at The Australian Ballet in 2024, and a recent wave of new dancers and celebrated promotions are central to the frisson of excitement in the air.



Principal Artists Jill Ogai and Marcus Morelli
Photo Pierre Toussaint

Exciting elevations

2023 rounded out with a bang as outgoing Philanthropy Ambassador, Jill Ogai, and Marcus Morelli were promoted to The Australian Ballet's highest rank of principal artist, following their stand-out performances in the company's 60th year, including *Swan Lake*, *Don Quixote*, *Jewels*, and Frederick Ashton's *The Dream / Marguerite and Armand*.

Commenting on the promotions, David Hallberg remarked, "One of the greatest privileges of my role as Artistic Director is to recognise the focus and dedication that individuals contribute to our company, and both Jill and Marcus have consistently demonstrated the outstanding technical ability and exceptional artistry that exemplifies the rank of principal artist. I have enjoyed watching them grow as artists and individuals both on stage and in the studio and I'm excited to see all that they achieve in their new leadership roles."

In addition to Jill and Marcus, 14 dancers from across the company received well-deserved promotions in the days before their end of year break. Yuumi Yamada was promoted to senior artist, Cameron Holmes, Misha Barkidjija, Katherine Sonnekus, Aya Watanabe and Maxim Zenin were promoted to soloist. While Lilla Harvey, Larissa Kiyoto-Ward, Adam Elmes, Hugo Dumapit, Sara Andrlon, Saranja Crowe, Evie Ferris and Montana Rubin were all elevated to the rank of coryphée. What a glorious and joyful end to our glittering 60th year!



You can watch a video of the company promotions by scanning this QR code.



(L-R) Isabella Smith, Mia Heathcote, Victor Estevez, Alexandra Walton, David Hallberg, Alice McArthur, Yaru Xu, Laura Griffiths, Macy Trethewey, Davi Ramos. Not pictured Charlton Tough, Corey Gavan, Jeremy Hargreaves.

New beginnings

11 dynamic dancers joined The Australian Ballet in January, bringing fresh energy to the company as a new season got underway.

The three brilliant soloists joining the Ballet family are Davi Ramos, Mia Heathcote and Victor Estévez.

Hailing from Brazil, Davi Ramos trained at The Royal Ballet School in London and was a semi-finalist in the Prix de Lausanne in 2016. Davi joined Het Nationale Ballet in Amsterdam in 2019, where he held the rank of grand sujet.

Melbourne-born Mia Heathcote has danced captivating lead roles including the title role in *Manon*. She graduated from The Australian Ballet School in 2013 and joined the Queensland Ballet in early 2014 before getting promoted to principal artist in 2022. Mia performed with The Australian Ballet while still a student in a special 50th anniversary work, *Swee de edee*.

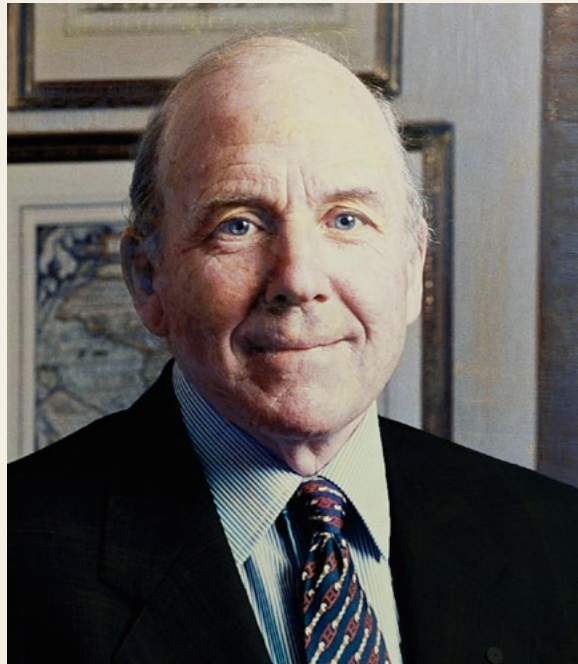
Cuban dancer Victor Estévez danced with the National Ballet of Cuba before joining the Queensland Ballet as a principal artist in 2016. Victor has gone on to dance

leading roles across the classical and contemporary repertoire, including Romeo in Kenneth MacMillan's *Romeo and Juliet*, and Prince Siegfried in Ben Stevenson's *Swan Lake*.

Our Corps de Ballet has been enhanced too, with the addition of eight new members. Six new recruits, Yaru Xu, Isabella Smith, Macy Trethewey, Charlton Tough, Corey Gavan and Jeremy Hargreaves join from The Australian Ballet School. New Zealand-born Alice McArthur has also been welcomed as a recent graduate of the John Cranko Schule in Stuttgart, meanwhile Laura Griffiths debuted with the company in August 2023, following three years training at the English National Ballet School.

Sharing the exciting news, David Hallberg commented, "It is always a thrill welcoming new dancers to the company, whether that's young artists at the start of their career, or established performers adding their experience to our company. To be welcoming such a large cohort, especially with so many from The Australian Ballet School, is a testament to the depth of talent in this country."

Turn to page 28 to get to know our new Corps de Ballet members a little better.



Vale Robert Albert

AO RFD RD

The Australian Ballet salutes a great champion of our organisation with the passing of leading philanthropist, Robert Albert AO RFD RD

With 25 years of service to The Australian Ballet as a Board Member, Robert was made an Honorary Life Member in 2004.

Together with his wife, Libby, Robert was a deeply committed supporter of The Australian Ballet and interested in all aspects of the company. He was a devoted patron of our Annual Giving program since the late 1980s, an enthusiastic supporter of special events, and a generous benefactor of medical equipment to improve the health and wellbeing of our dancers.

His contribution has been vast and his enduring legacy will be The Robert & Elizabeth Albert Music Fund, which supports new commission scores along with other special activities for The Australian Ballet. In recent years, Robert gifted two fellowships to support emerging young conductors and ballet pianists, to ensure Australia has this local talent for its ballet.

Robert will be remembered for his *leadership, commitment, and enduring love* of The Australian Ballet.



Originating *Oscar*®



Principal Artist Joseph Caley and Adam Elmes
Photo Christopher Rodgers-Wilson

Talking Pointe





The *wonderful world* of Wheeldon and the creation of a new signature work

In 2024, Artistic Director David Hallberg is taking his commitment to creative adventure up a notch as he leads the company on a journey of discovery and development.

Emboldened with a sense of optimism and a desire to continue The Australian Ballet's upwards trajectory, David's choice of creative collaborators and diverse repertoire is indicative of his appetite for artistic innovation.

Award-winning, British-born Director and Choreographer Christopher Wheeldon, is one of the stellar talents who will be creating on the company in Season 2024. Not once, but twice this year, our dancers and audiences have the chance to dive into the wonderful world of Wheeldon, through the return of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*® and the world premiere of *Oscar*® - a groundbreaking ballet based on the life and writings of Oscar Wilde.

Known for his unapologetically fun and all-embracingly artistic productions, Christopher creates work that "bridges the world between theatre and ballet" and he likes to "step really far out of [his] comfort zone" when cherry picking his projects.

Oscar® exemplifies this attitude and approach, as Christopher explains. "In this case, David and I spoke very openly about finding a character and a subject that expressed a different way of telling stories in ballet. I think we both felt that it was time to explore a same sex relationship in the grand scale framework of a full-length narrative story ballet.

"With *Oscar*®, there was no story in place. We've built the story ourselves ... It's a complex subject matter. [Oscar Wilde] wasn't necessarily a figure that you would look at and associate with dance. I very much believe in stepping into a place of uncertainty and fear, and using that as an energy to then create."

Mirroring the energy of his productions on stage, Christopher's creative process is just as playful and liberated. "I live very much in the moment and am spontaneous in the way that I create. Of course, I know what I have to say in each moment and there's a very clear narrative and musical structure ... it's very much about me and the dancer and what we come up with together."

In the dance and theatre world, receiving a bespoke Wheeldon work is just about as good as it gets; it's a huge coup. "Christopher's a seasoned creative ... It's a big deal that he's coming to Australia to create a work solely for us," David explains. This commission builds on the relationship the company has had with Christopher since performing *After the Rain*, *Continuum*, *DGV: Danse à Grande Vitesse* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*® and is representative of David's standing in the arts as well as the company's burgeoning reputation on the world stage.

The feeling's mutual, as Wheeldon expresses, "There's an enormous amount of talent in this company ... the company is excellent and on the level of many of the greats in Europe and in the States. And, because of the distance, everyone's just so grateful. When you come and you take time, and you want to create, that makes for a really positive energy in the room."





Left Principal Artist Sharni Spencer and Christopher Wheeldon
Above Henry Berlin and Hugo Dumapit
Photos Christopher Rodgers-Wilson

“This is a brave new world for us and that’s as it should be.”

David Hallberg, Artistic Director

Oscar® is the first of the company’s new repertoire that has been especially curated and designed to shine on the stages of both Sydney Opera House and the Regent Theatre in Melbourne, and audiences can expect a suitably stylish take on Wilde’s life. An amalgamation of joy, beauty and tragedy, interwoven with the playwright’s personal experiences through his beloved stories and characters, including *The Nightingale and the Rose* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

“We’re taking artistic risks with *Oscar*® and we’re not beating around the bush in terms of the vibrant life Oscar lived,” explains David. “This is a brave new world for us and that’s as it should be.”

***Oscar*® has been generously funded by Lady Potter AC CMRI and The David Hallberg Fund for Artistic Aspiration.**

Brodie James and Jake Mangakahia
Photo Christopher Rodgers-Wilson



DANCING QUEEN

A trip down memory lane with
Principal Artist Robyn Hendricks



Robyn Hendricks has been a beloved fixture of The Australian Ballet for two decades.

Born in South Africa, Robyn took to ballet when she was eight years old and her grandfather noticed her instinct for dancing on her toes. When she travelled to Melbourne in 2001 to participate in the annual Cecchetti International Competition, Robyn caught the attention of The Australian Ballet School and was invited to audition. Following a formative student exchange to study with the Canada's National Ballet School in Toronto, she eventually started dancing with The Australian Ballet in 2004. The rest, as they say, is history...

Highly revered by choreographers and colleagues for her versatility, artistic flair and pristine technique, Robyn – a principal artist since 2016 – continues to enrapture audiences with her emotionally nuanced performances.

To celebrate her 20th anniversary with the company, Robyn guides us through some of the most memorable roles in her enviable career so far.

La Bayadère – The Kingdom of the Shades (2004)

La Bayadère was the first thing I ever did with The Australian Ballet, when I was in my final year with The Australian Ballet School, and it's punctuated my performing life a number of times since. I had received my contract for the following year, but the company needed a few extra girls to join a gala performance and I was lucky enough to be one of the girls selected to do *La Bayadère* – The Kingdom of the Shades.

It's one of the hardest pieces for a ballerina to perform and is probably one of the most nerve-wracking things I've done as a professional dancer, but it was also one of the most rewarding. As a student, I was absolutely petrified to be performing alongside the dancers I had long looked up to, but they showed me such encouragement and support. I remember thinking that The Australian Ballet was going to be a really good fit for me. It was a great introduction to what was to come.

I've had the opportunity to revisit the work a couple of times since. First in 2014, when I performed my first full-length principal role of Gamzatti and was also cast in the principal role of Nikiya. Then, again, in 2021 when the company first returned to the stage during the pandemic for Summertime at the Ballet. That was a very special, full-circle moment and I still felt the same nerves and sense of accomplishment stepping off the stage then, as I did 17 years earlier.



After the Rain (2006)

I feel like the first thing people saw me perform in and thought I might have something special to offer was *After the Rain* by Christopher Wheeldon, just a year after the ballet had premiered. I was pretty young still – only a couple of years into my career and in the Corps de Ballet – when another dancer’s injury led to me being cast in the principal role on opening night.

As it turned out, I was well suited to the role and style of dance and, in hindsight, it brought me into Wheeldon’s vision just as his choreography career was starting to take off. I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with him on a number of productions since.

Principal Artist Robyn Hendricks and Robert Curran,
After the Rain (Wheeldon) 2006
Photo Jess Bialek



In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated (2016)

Dancing William Forsythe’s *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated* was both hugely challenging and fulfilling. It’s a dynamic work and very taxing on the body, with a lot of hard technical elements, which was great for me at the time because it pushed me out of my comfort zone. I learned so much about my body and the way that I can move, and, in time, it opened so many other doors for me.

Principal Artist Robyn Hendricks and Kevin Jackson,
In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated (Forsythe) 2016
Photo Daniel Boud



Stephen Baynes’ Swan Lake (2012)

I reflect on being cast as Odile/ Odette in Stephen Baynes’ *Swan Lake* as a truly defining role. It was the first traditional reimagining of the work for many years and a very special moment for me.

It was at a time in my career when I felt ready: my body was ready and my mind was ready. Odile/ Odette is a significant role for any ballerina to perform but, at that point in time, it felt like the stars were aligning for me. As it turned out, I got promoted to principal artist on that role four years later, which makes it even more meaningful to me.

Principal Artist Robyn Hendricks, *Swan Lake* (Baynes) 2012
Photo Kate Longley



David Hallberg's *Swan Lake* (2023)

Ten years after dancing Baynes' *Swan Lake* for the company's 50th anniversary, I was cast as Odile/Odette in David Hallberg's reimagining of Anne Woolliams' *Swan Lake* for our 60th anniversary. It was my returning role after having my daughter Margaux and a really proud moment to be able to come back to something as significant as *Swan Lake*.

It's amazing that it happened the way it did, and I was fortunate that my body was able to do it. I have high expectations for myself, but I took things day by day. At times it was like I was having an out-of-body experience, but it was also wonderful to work with my new body and learn to trust my new instincts for approaching my work a little differently.

Principal Artist Robyn Hendricks
Photo Simon Eeles



Anna Karenina (2022)

I'm a huge lover of the big classical ballets and story ballets, so *Anna Karenina* was a joy to sink my teeth into. It's so dark and dramatic and satisfying to chip away at, especially with such a fantastic team of people to be working alongside.

Dancing this ballet with Callum Linnane was wonderful. I love working with him. We have a really strong connection and great banter, which always helps, and he's 'all in' on everything – a beautiful quality in any partner.

Principal Artists Robyn Hendricks and Callum Linnane,
Anna Karenina (Possokhov) 2021
Photo Christopher Rodgers-Wilson

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland® (2024)

When I returned from maternity leave, I was introduced to Maxim Zenin who, at the time, was a relatively new member of the company. I've since had the pleasure of partnering with him – most recently for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*® and, as the more experienced artist, mentoring him in the way that I was fortunate to be on the receiving end of earlier in my career. It's a huge responsibility, but it's also incredibly special because I'm getting to know him from the beginning and am building a beautiful relationship with him.

Principal Artist Robyn Hendricks,
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland® (Wheeldon) 2024
Photo Christopher Rodgers-Wilson

Lifting us *higher*

The power of
philanthropy in 2023



Specific purpose major gifts and endowment funds

Specific purpose major gifts and endowments from visionary individuals continue to play a vital role in the long-term sustainability and reputational evolution of The Australian Ballet, by elevating and enhancing the company in innovative ways.

In 2023, \$8.5 million of these funds invaluable underpinned our key activities and enabled our strategic priorities, including:

Artistic excellence

The David Hallberg Fund for Artistic Aspiration was a powerhouse in this field in 2023. Lady Potter established this fund in 2021 so that David Hallberg could fast-track his ambitious creative vision for The Australian Ballet without compromise. A group of the company's leading philanthropists joined with Lady Potter to build a strong corpus together and, in 2023, The David Hallberg Fund came into its own when it underwrote two landmark, full-length ballets for our 60th anniversary season: *Don Quixote* and *Jewels*.

Swan Lake, the centrepiece of our celebratory season, was the third ballet funded by philanthropy in 2023. A wave of leadership gifts from the Sarah and Lachlan Murdoch Foundation, the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation and Lady Potter inspired hundreds of members of our community to come together and support the realisation of David's reimagining of Anne Woolliams' iconic production. The force of this collective effort was felt as the company toured the production around Australia to rapturous audiences and will continue to reverberate as the repertoire is danced by future generations.

Identity, a celebratory double-bill bringing together two of Australia's leading choreographic voices for Season 2023, was also powered by our philanthropic family whose appreciation of dance allows us to be brave, bold and beautiful. The Kenneth R Reed Fund, The Robert and Elizabeth Albert Music Fund and The Dame Margaret Scott Fund all enabled the creation of *Identity*, and Alice Topp's Resident Choreographer position was supported by the Geraldine Lawton Bequest. Additionally, the groundbreaking new scores commissioned for *Identity*, by Deborah Cheetham Fraillon and Christopher Gordon, were realised with the philanthropic support of The Robert and Libby Albert Music Fund.

The late Robert Albert and his wife Libby also established The Robert and Elizabeth Albert Music Fellowship. This initiative aims to nurture Australia's local talent to support its ballet performances by awarding fellowships to promising young conductors and ballet pianists. Joel Bass began his tenure as the Robert and Elizabeth Albert Conducting Fellow in 2023, for a two-year period.

The impact of The Australian Ballet's giving community in the company's 60th year was extraordinary.

Here, we highlight many of the ways you, and your fellow supporters, have enabled the evolution of The Australian Ballet in its diamond anniversary year. Together you have helped to set a new benchmark for artistic and operational excellence as we spring into a new decade of dance.

Annual Giving

Our Annual Giving program, the heartbeat of the company and one of the most important ways our cohort reinforces the stability of the company today, saw its strongest year ever in 2023. 3,500 people made gifts to the program last year, totalling \$4.7 million.

This unparalleled contribution from a growing group of patrons funded the essential artistic operations that enabled our artists and company to thrive in our anniversary year.

Planned Giving

It was also a year of powerful growth for our Planned Giving program. Motivated by dialogues extending from our 2022 Supporter Survey, many people continued to reaffirm their deep love and care for The Australian Ballet in 2023, by confirming a gift in their will. The foresight and generosity of these individuals provides substantial confidence to the Board and management and affords us the ability to plan with assurance for our future.

Today, half of The Australian Ballet's endowment funds are from bequests and, in 2023, almost \$1 million of income earned on bequests received over the lifetime of the program was used to underpin our financial stability. This income directly funded our general artistic operations and the production costs associated with *The Dream / Marguerite and Armand* season.



Meanwhile, Storytime Ballet, our seasons of interactive performances for the next generation of dance enthusiasts, continues to garner enthusiastic support from our community. Gandel Philanthropy, the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation and more than 2,000 individual donors across Australia brought the magic of *Storytime Ballet: Cinderella* to 24,708 audience members in Sydney, Adelaide, Canberra, Brisbane and Melbourne.

Dancers

The power of philanthropy was instrumental in the development of our talented company of artists in 2023 by subsidising dancers' salaries, funding access to the very best training for their career and perspectives from the most revered coaches to unlock their true potential.

Sylvie Guillem, widely regarded as one of the greatest dancers of our time, joined the company as Guest Coach, Principal Roles for *Don Quixote* and *Swan Lake* last year. Generously supported by The Bowness Family Foundation Fund for Artistic Development, Sylvie's presence undoubtedly empowered David Hallberg and the dancers of The Australian Ballet to achieve elevated standards and even greater heights in this historic year.

The Australian Ballet's commitment to its dancers extends far beyond the stage. The company's trailblazing approach to dancer health and wellbeing – including professional development, in anticipation of life after dance – is generously supported by our Ballet Ambassadors. In 2023, the company's next generation of philanthropists also directly supported the company's artists by funding the research and implementation of world-leading health-related practices developed in conjunction with our Research Partner, La Trobe University.

“As we now head into a period of change and innovation, it is this *passion and commitment* that will allow the company to *shine even brighter* as we continue to go from *strength to strength* in 2024 and beyond.”

Kenneth Watkins AM, Philanthropy Director



Intergenerational Dance Class
Photo Jaimi Joy

International touring

The generosity of our giving community also powered two celebratory tours in this milestone year. The company's 60th Anniversary London Tour – our first international tour since 2019 and the first-time back dancing on the iconic Royal Opera House stage for 35 years – was fully enabled by philanthropy.

Our International Touring Fund was established in 2005. In time, and buoyed by subsequent fundraising, the fund has grown to become one of the most powerful endowments in the company's history and will continue to play an even more critical role as our global touring ambitions accelerate.

We are indebted to the support of our UK Foundation members, London Advisory Group, Global Ambassadors, and patrons who made it possible for us to proudly represent our country and perform a sell-out tour to 11,919 international ballet lovers on one of the world's greatest stages.

Touring Australia

In addition, domestic touring continues to be a highlight of The Australian Ballet's annual calendar, as an expression of the company's enduring and evolving commitment to create meaningful and inspiring connections with communities and dance lovers across Australia.

In 2023, we were able to continue our 40-year tradition of presenting world-class ballet in regional towns around the country, thanks to contributions to the Regional Touring Fund, which was originated by Lord Glendonbrook in 2017.

The Australian Ballet On Tour (formerly the Regional Tour) reached 7,839 audience and community members in Victoria and New South Wales across its eight-town tour.

Community

Another beneficiary of specific purpose major gifts is the company's hard-working Education and Outreach Program, which aims to increase participation, knowledge and awareness of dance, while supporting educational and wellbeing outcomes across the nation.

Over a 40-week period in 2023, attendance was 29,963 across seven states and territories through the program's extensive accessible and inclusive delivery methods, including in-school experiences, holiday programs and community residencies, as well as ongoing in-person and online professional development for teachers.

The visionary philanthropic support from the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation, Sir Andrew and Lady Fairley Foundation, Graf Family Foundation, James N Kirby Foundation, Cory Charitable Foundation, Dr Lee McCormick Edwards Charitable Foundation and many generous individual donors across Australia allows this program to be delivered at no cost every year.

–

"As I reflect on the role of philanthropy in The Australian Ballet's 60th year, there is a great deal to feel proud of and grateful for," says Kenneth Watkins Philanthropy Director. "So many of these moments only happened because of the company's prudent Board governance and Executive management, reinforced by the devotion of a philanthropic community and the strong corpus they have steadily and intentionally built together."



Dynamic Meet our new
Philanthropy Ambassadors
duo

Coryphée Drew Hedditch and Corps de Ballet Dancer Annabelle Watt are firm friends, colleagues and now, partners in philanthropy as they become the fifth dancer duo to take on the mantle of Philanthropy Ambassador.

Taking the reins from Principal Artist Jill Ogai and Senior Artist Jarryd Madden, Drew and Annabelle are thrilled to be joining our community as the special conduits between the company of dancers and our generous supporters.

We sat down with Drew and Annabelle as Season 2024 got underway to get to know them a little better and to hear what makes them tick, on and off the stage.

Congratulations on becoming our new Philanthropy Ambassadors!

Drew

Thank you! I've been dancing with The Australian Ballet now for 10 years and, for all that time, I've been aware that what I do would not be possible without our patrons who dedicate their time and donate money to support us, and whose generosity enables the development of the company. It's such a privilege to be stepping into the role.

Annabelle

So true! As dancers, we have our huge ballet dreams. Not only do our patrons share those dreams with us, but they make them happen. So, spending time with the people who are there for us year in, year out and getting to know them better is a huge honour.

Are there any aspects of the role that you're particularly looking forward to?

Drew

Well, I'm super social, so I'm really excited about getting to meet so many interesting people and to deepen connections with them by bonding over ballet.

Annabelle

Yes! I am such a proud The Australian Ballet dancer. I don't just love ballet, I love the company that I'm in and I love the community around us. I'm looking forward to forming new friendships and closer bonds with people who are such a vital part of our Ballet family.

What a time it's been for the company. There have been some incredible celebrations and milestones marked in recent years. Which ones stand out the most to you?

Annabelle

Swan Lake was a huge moment for me. As you know, the production was fully funded by philanthropy and that really hit home when I was trying on my tutu and saw the name of one of our donors, who had directly supported that role, stitched into the waistband. It felt so personal; so special and every time when I put that on – for each of my 53 shows – I felt like that person was on the journey with me.

I grew up wanting to be a swan and watching the likes of Kirsty Martin and Amber Scott dance *Odile/ Odette*, so another highlight was to be one of Amber's swans for her last performance as she retired. That was so special. A true 'pinch me' moment.

Drew

A couple of moments stand out for me too. First was bringing *Romeo and Juliet* back into the repertoire in 2022, because it hadn't been performed for so long. John Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet* has so much history within this company and it's always been a ballet that I wanted to be a part of. I think it has the most incredible ballet score – the music tells the story, and it's so painful, so harrowing. So, being cast as Mercutio and getting to live that story; to be a guest in that world, as a character who I could have so much fun with and have the best death scene ever... what more could I ask for?

As well, being in the first Australian cast of *Jewels* and getting to dance it at the Royal Opera House was incredible. Standing on the stage of such an iconic and historic venue and taking the steps that the greats had taken before us, in the same ballet too, was out of this world. I'll look back on that experience forever.



Annabelle grew up in Brisbane and started dancing all styles at the age of three. She trained with Janine McGrath at Classical Coaching Australia before receiving The Robert and Elizabeth Albert Scholarship to The Australian Ballet School when she was 15. After graduating in 2020 she was welcomed into The Australian Ballet by Artistic Director David Hallberg.

Season 2024 is bringing some brilliant opportunities for audiences and dancers too. What are you most looking forward to performing this year?

Annabelle

I'm really excited for *Études*. It'll be like a showcase of what we do every day. People often ask us what class is like and *Études* is a more elevated portrayal of what we do to warm up for our day. Beginning at the barre, it showcases some really challenging steps that, may not look so hard when you're watching, but doing it on stage will be a whole other ball game. It'll be a great discovery of not only classical ballet technique but artistic performance too. I can't wait.

Drew

Personally, I'm particularly eager to get stuck into *Oscar*®. Working with Christopher [Wheeldon] is insane, and how he collaborates with Joby [Talbot] ... their process is incredible to observe and to be a part of. The prospect of exploring that world again – an authentic world that's created with such a clear vision – is really exciting. It's going to be so beautiful and so very different to anything we've done before.

Obviously, ballet keeps you very busy, but what do you enjoy doing to unwind when you're not in the studio or in season?

Annabelle

I'm fortunate to live close to the beach, so that's where you'll find me every morning. I put my phone away, I sit and have a coffee and I swim. It's how I start each day, all year round and it's beautiful. I feel like saltwater's got magic in it.

Post-COVID, I seem to have caught the travel bug too, so I spend a lot of time dreaming about destinations and planning my next trip.

Drew

I really love baking, thanks to my grandma, a proud CWA [Country Women's Association] woman. She taught me everything I know ... I don't really measure, I bake by feel, and I know what my creamed butter should look like.

I also play around a lot with film photography, so that's a creative outlet for me and I'm obviously surrounded with some great subjects in the studio. I think film's such an honest image – it's just dependent on light and is closer to how we experience life, so I'm enjoying exploring and combining my passions in that way.



Drew was born in Canberra. He started tap-dancing at the age of five and ballet at the age of eight, training at the Lisa Clark Dance Centre, before joining The Australian Ballet School's full-time program in 2011. During his time at the school, he toured with The Dancers Company in 2012 and 2013, and performed at the Assemblée Internationale in Toronto in 2013. He joined The Australian Ballet in 2014 and was promoted to coryphée in 2018.



The Changemakers

**The team keeping
our dancers dancing,
for longer**

Dr Sue Mayes AM, Director of Artistic Health, Principal Physiotherapist and Adjunct Research Fellow at La Trobe University, has been the driving force behind The Australian Ballet's Artistic Health team for nearly 30 years.

Over that time, she has assembled a brilliant group of multi-disciplinary healthcare specialists and researchers who are innovating in their fields to improve the health, wellbeing and performance of our artists. By exploring the limits of the human body and applying learnings, Sue and the Artistic Health team ensure the dancers keep doing what they love for as long as they can.

Globally renowned for their truly trailblazing work, the Artistic Health team, in collaboration with Research Partner La Trobe University and with the philanthropic support of our Ballet Ambassadors, is breaking new ground, changing the way the dance industry operates and setting new global standards in the elite athlete arena.

Here, we highlight three of the world-leading initiatives Sue and the team are delivering to optimise dancer performance.

Body image

Strength and self-esteem are central to a dancer's performance and quality of life, which is why Sue and her team are pioneering the development of sector-leading Body Image and Disordered Eating Guidelines in partnership with the National Eating Disorders Collaboration (NEDC).

It began with a voluntary, anonymous survey and series of focus groups with our dancers. Led by Dr Beth Shelton and her team at the NEDC, the survey aimed to provide a better understanding of the prevalence of body image issues within the company and identify core themes to address.

Over time and spurred on by the survey results that reinforced the need to address the matter, teams were brought together from across The Australian Ballet and The Australian Ballet School to participate in workshops to investigate existing support systems and begin to build improved ones.

The subsequent guidelines span prevention, company-wide education and implementation to break down embedded cultural norms and shift the focus from dancers' appearance to performance. The guidelines outline clear guidance for dancers and support people, scaffolded by evolved processes for staff to follow when supporting dancers, governed by an interdisciplinary working group who will oversee delivery and monitor progress, through regular benchmarking and reporting.

“These guidelines are the first of their kind in professional ballet. We believe that by taking the steps outlined, we can create a safe and supportive environment for our dancers to thrive both on and off the stage, build long and fulfilling careers, and excel in their post-dance lives.”

David Hallberg, Artistic Director

Partnering program

Every year the Artistic Health team evaluate the dancers' injuries to inform their strategic approach to injury prevention. In 2023, they were seeing a prevalence of injuries in flat-based dancers, which could be attributed to their partnering techniques.

As with all the team's performance preparation programs, the aim is to minimise injury but also enhance performance. The team immediately identified an opportunity to implement a revolutionary new circuit training program that incorporated functional movements associated with partnering and performance.

The sessions were run during work hours during a quieter time of year, for ease of attendance, and the fresh approach to functional strength training proved both enjoyable and effective. So much so, that the team are now in the process of planning a complementary program that will support the pointe-based dancers with their partnering.

Mental fatigue

Another recurring theme identified by the Artistic Health team's monitoring of dancer health and wellbeing has been fatigue. Particularly, injuries such as ankle sprains, that occur when the dancers' brains and bodies are getting tired.

On closer examination, it was determined that those injuries were occurring due to mental fatigue attributed – in part – to learning and performing large volumes of new and contrasting choreography.

This insight set up an interesting proposition for the team to explore with Research Partner, La Trobe University, who ran focus groups with the dancers and Artistic staff to delve deeper into this challenge.

As Physiotherapist and Researcher, Matthew Wirdnam, explains, “We've almost reached the end of maximising physical performance of our dancers and tackling mental fatigue may allow us to rise to the next level.”

Looking ahead, the Artistic Health team will develop a program of activities – built in conjunction and in consultation with the company – to work towards reducing mental fatigue in the dancer community.

With the widespread relevance of this study piquing the interest of peers in the elite sport world, all eyes are on The Australian Ballet as we lead the way again!



Fresh Faces

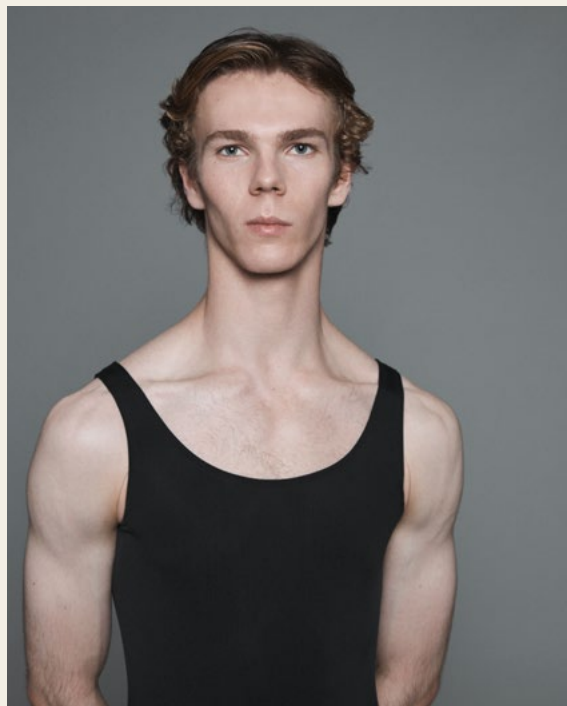
Yaru Xu and Macy Trethewey
Photo Daniel Boud

Talking Pointe



Get to know the newest artists in the Corps de Ballet

Signalling the arrival of the next generation, eight new dancers joined our corps de ballet at the beginning of 2024. Here we find out more about the new dancers' lives, loves, hopes and dreams.



Corey Gavan

Corey was born in Wollongong, New South Wales where he learnt ballet and discovered his love of music and art at Beverley Rowles School of Dance. In 2019 he enrolled at The Australian Ballet School where he trained for five years, graduating in 2023, before joining The Australian Ballet.

What does it mean to you to be dancing professionally with The Australian Ballet?

From the very first moment I began ballet, I knew that it was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. During my time at The Australian Ballet School, I would spend my days training and my nights at the theatre watching The Australian Ballet. So, to now be living my life dancing and performing with the company and artists I have looked up to for so long, brings me such purpose and fulfillment.

What is your bucket list role or repertoire to perform?

I would have to say Romeo. When I was still with The Australian Ballet School, I was an extra for the Melbourne season of *Romeo and Juliet*, so the role holds a really special place in my heart. It was my first proper glimpse 'behind the curtain' and it really opened my eyes to the professional ballet world. I think Prokofiev's score is a masterpiece too. To dance to that music and tell such a true, human and honest story would be a dream come true.

What are you most looking forward to performing in this year?

It is difficult to choose just one work, as each piece brings its own set of challenges and excitement. That said, I think *The Nutcracker* excites me most. I'm a huge fan of Tchaikovsky so I'm incredibly excited to hear that score again and, as someone who has never performed *The Nutcracker* before, I am really looking forward to performing the iconic ballet for the first time.



Laura Griffiths

Growing up in the Macedon Ranges, Victoria, Laura started jazz dancing at age four before beginning ballet the following year. She undertook full-time studies at the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School before being accepted into the English National Ballet School at 16, where she trained for three years. Laura joined The Australian Ballet in August 2023, performing in Anne Woolliams' *Swan Lake* and Frederick Ashton's *The Dream*.

What has been the highlight of your first months in the company?

Starting my career with The Australian Ballet in Anne Woolliams and David Hallberg's *Swan Lake* was so special. I loved going out on stage every night and to have the opportunity to explore different roles. Experiencing Sylvie Guillem's insights as Guest Coach was surreal too; a real pinch me moment.

What is your bucket list role or repertoire to perform?

I'd love to perform one of William Forsythe's pieces someday: *Playlist (EP)*, *Blake Works* or *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated*. The soundtracks for these works are captivating, and I love how classical movement merges with athleticism to complement one another.

Who do you look up to in life and/or dance?

I've always looked up to my close friends and family. Their dedication to finding their passions and commitment to navigating any challenges that have come their way, has really shaped the way I see the world.



Jeremy Hargreaves

Jeremy was born in Sydney where he trained at North Shore Dance Academy. He moved to Melbourne in 2015 and trained at Laneway Dance before being accepted into The Australian Ballet School in 2019. Jeremy represented The Australian Ballet School at the 2023 Prix de Lausanne and graduated as Dux of Level 8.

What was your journey into dance?

Growing up, I was always dancing, making guests who came to our house watch me dance to my favourite songs before they could do anything else. When I was seven, after seeing my sister go to her ballet class many times, I decided to join her and never looked back.

Now, to dance in The Australian Ballet, is nothing short of a dream come to fruition. Seeing all these amazing artists every day, is deeply life affirming and inspiring. It's an honour to be a part of this group of dancers who are producing art and work that I look at as truly important and relevant.

Where do you draw inspiration from?

Outside of dance, spending time with loved ones and having fun is a priority. I love photography and collecting vintage cameras. Taking photos brings me a lot of joy.

What are you most looking forward to performing in this year?

I can't wait to perform *Études* and *Circle Electric* this year. I adore contemporary and classical equally and feel lucky to be in a company that focuses on both so well.

Alice McArthur

Born in New Zealand, Alice began dancing at the age of three with the Mt Eden Ballet Academy. She joined The Australian Ballet School's Intra/Interstate & International Training Program and later won a scholarship to train with the John Cranko Schule in Germany. Alice graduated in July 2023 and danced with the Paris Opera Ballet, before joining The Australian Ballet earlier this year.

What are you most looking forward to performing in this year?

I'm excited to experience being a part of the process of creating a whole new ballet: Christopher Wheeldon's *Oscar*®. I also love a good Christmas ballet, so I can't wait to dance *The Nutcracker*.

What is your bucket list role of repertoire to perform?

I have an ever-growing bucket list: the more I see, the more I want to do! But, one day, I would love to dance the dramatic narrative roles from Cranko, MacMillan and Neumeier, and to give absolutely everything to a role emotionally, as well as physically.

Who do you look up to in life and/or dance?

The first person to come to mind is one of my coaches in Stuttgart, Maria Eichwald. Not only is she a beautiful artist and dancer – someone I can always look to for inspiration – but she also has an incredible dedication to what she does, whether it is dancing or teaching.



Isabella Smith

Born in Karratha, Western Australia, Isabella was seven when she started dancing at the West Australian School of Dance. Isabella attended the 2020 Prix de Lausanne before relocating to Melbourne and joining The Australian Ballet School in 2021. Isabella also had the opportunity to train at Canada National Ballet School as part of an exchange program. In 2023 she performed in *Swan Lake* and *The Dream*, before officially joining the company in 2024.

What does it mean to you to be dancing professionally with The Australian Ballet?

It's such an honour to be dancing in my country's national ballet company. I was in The Australian Ballet School's Intra/Interstate & International Training Program from the age of eight, so to now be dancing alongside the artists of this company who I've looked up to for so long is a beautiful full circle moment for me.

What has been the highlight of your first months in the company?

Performing *Swan Lake*, such an iconic ballet, as my first professional season was an unreal experience and a great introduction to the company.

What are you most looking forward to performing in this year?

I'm so excited to perform *Oscar*® in 2024. To watch and be a part of the rehearsal process for a brand-new production is a really cool experience to be involved in.



Charlton Tough

Growing up in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, Charlton's journey in dance began in 2011 at the age of seven at the Utassy Ballet School. In 2017, Charlton embarked on formal training at the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School and gained admission to The Australian Ballet School in 2019, where he graduated as Dux in 2023.

What does it mean to you to be dancing professionally with The Australian Ballet?

To have a career in such an amazing company, working alongside so many extremely talented artists is a once in a lifetime opportunity that I am both thrilled and humbled by.

What is your bucket list role or repertoire to perform?

There are many roles that I would love to perform, such as Romeo, but I would have to say any work by choreographer Roland Petit, and more specifically his piece *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort* would be on top of that list.

Who do you look up to in life and/ or dance?

I look up to dancers such as Leonid Sarafanov, Carlos Acosta and Kimin Kim because of their breathtaking performances and the passion they put out on stage. Outside of dance, I look up to manga author, Kentaro Miura, because of how his works have moved me and have changed my perspective on storytelling as an art form.

Macy Trethewey

Macy was born in Canberra and began ballet at the age of three. She started part-time training at Lisa Clark Dance Centre and joined The Australian Ballet School in 2020. In 2023, Macy performed the title role of *Raymonda* in her graduating performance and was selected to perform in Anne Woolliams' *Swan Lake* with The Australian Ballet in the same year.

Where do you draw inspiration from?

Inspiration can strike at unexpected times. Personally, I find it comes from another person, a book, sometimes from music and often from something minute and seemingly insignificant.

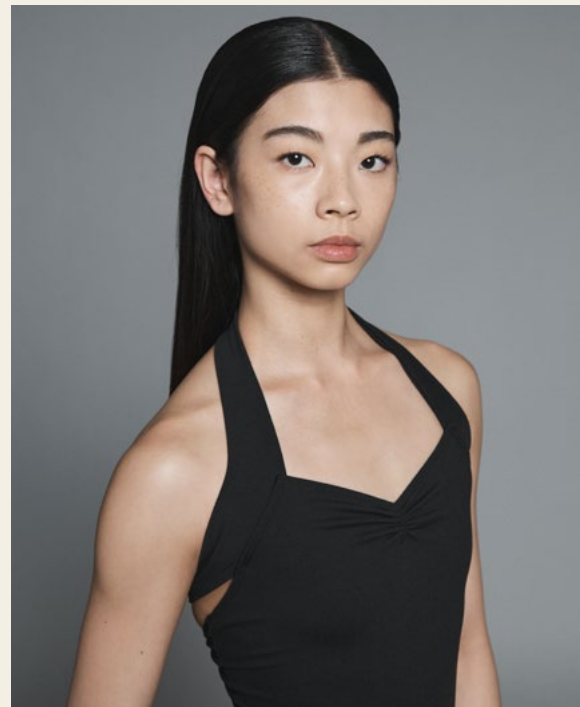
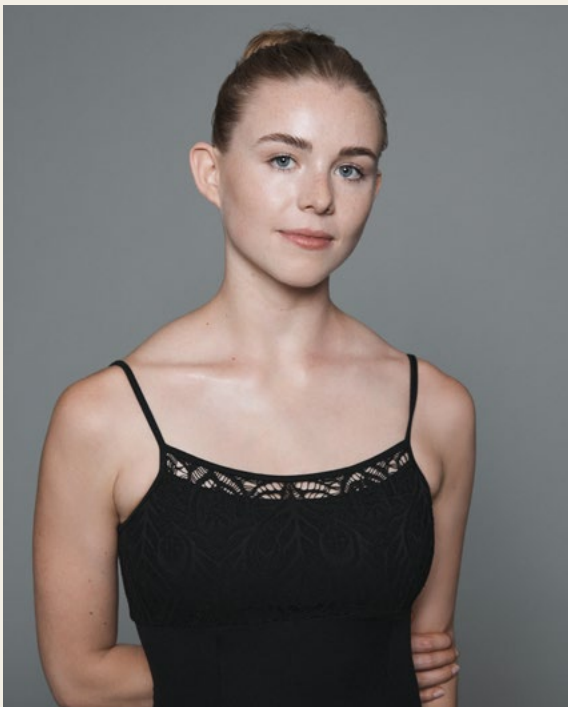
What has been the highlight of your first months in the company?

I loved being in *Swan Lake*! Not only was it technically challenging but it was also very rewarding and a fantastic experience that allowed me to grow as an artist.

What is your bucket list role or repertoire to perform?

I think both Juliet from *Romeo and Juliet* and Swanhilda from *Coppelia* are such beautiful roles. I would also love to dance *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Flames of Paris*.





Alexandra Walton

Alexandra was born in Sydney and began ballet classes when she was six. She trained at the Teresa Johnson Ballet School and Classical Ballet 121 before accepting a full scholarship to the Houston Ballet Academy at 16. She spent two years in the academy followed by two years in the second company (Houston Ballet 2), before accepting an apprentice position with the Houston Ballet Company for their 2022/23 season. After moving back to Australia in 2023, Alexandra performed with The Australian Ballet in Anne Woolliams' *Swan Lake* and Frederick Ashton's *The Dream*.

What is your bucket list role or repertoire to perform?

My bucket list role is the Diamonds pas de deux from *Jewels*. The elegance and grace is the epitome of classical ballet and Balanchine's choreography is incredibly masterful.

Who do you look up to in life and/ or dance?

I look up to many people in my life but especially the senior artists with The Australian Ballet, who inspire me every day. I also really look up to dancers who are willing to take risks and be gutsy on stage and who also aren't afraid to show vulnerability in their dancing. Some people who come to mind, who I have been watching videos of for years are Marianela Núñez, Natalia Osipova and Amber Scott.

Yaru Xu

Yaru was born in Xiamen, China and moved to Perth, Western Australia in 2009. She trained at John Curtin College of The Arts and, in 2018, won The Australian Ballet School Scholarship Award where she completed her training. In 2023, during her graduate year at The Australian Ballet School, Yaru joined The Australian Ballet's production of Anne Woolliams' *Swan Lake* and Frederick Ashton's *The Dream*.

Who do you look up to in life and/or dance?

I'd love to be a choreographer one day, so I look up to David Dawson and Crystal Pite and find inspiration in the most beautiful works they've created.

What are you most looking forward to performing in this year?

I remember watching Stephanie Lake's *Circle Electric* last year in the audience and I was so drawn to the style, the music and the piece itself. Now, working creatively with Stephanie is allowing me to explore another side of me where I can listen to my most natural movements. It's such a beautiful and powerful feeling to be able to move this way.

The greatest JOY

Jane Freudenstein AM on
the energy and passion that
fuels The Australian Ballet



Jane Freudenstein, Foundation Board Chair and Board member of The Australian Ballet, has a profound appreciation for the arts. An admiration that has long walked hand in hand with her passion for philanthropy and belief that the performing arts bring people from all walks of life together.

Naturally purpose-driven, Jane's expertise from an executive career in marketing and advertising, coupled with her involvement on numerous arts and health boards, built towards her appointment to Chair of the Foundation Board in 2020. She has since guided the Foundation Board as it strives to expand and enrich the network around The Australian Ballet and empower the company on its mission to thrive as a national cultural leader.

As The Australian Ballet enters a new phase of growth, Philanthropy Director Kenneth Watkins caught up with Jane to explore her connection to the art form, relationship with the company and the role of the Foundation Board.

Jane, like everyone in our community, you have your own ballet story. Where does yours start?

I spent my formative years growing up in New York and can still remember being five and going to watch New York City Ballet perform *The Nutcracker* for the first time. Seeing *The Nutcracker* at Christmas became a much-loved family tradition that continued long into adulthood and regularly involved three generations of my family.

We later moved from New York to London where my love of the art form continued. My connection to the stories deepened, and the experiences intensified, especially when sharing the art form with friends and family, which only magnified and heightened the sensation.

So, when did your connection with The Australian Ballet begin?

In my teens, I moved to Australia and began attending performances of The Australian Ballet, which later inspired me to become a subscriber. In time I became close to the company and was fortunate to attend a fundraising dinner for David McAllister's production of *Cinderella*. To go to 'Cinderella's ball', see her carriage in-situ at a beautiful home in such an immersive, shared experience with likeminded people who also care about the art form was magical. The event fulfilled every fantasy I had about what the ballet meant for me as a child and, as an adult, it completely embodied the culture of the company.

Over time, your relationship with the company became more formal as you became involved with the Foundation Board. How did that come about?

That's right. Growing up in a family where the arts and philanthropy were important and valued, I've always had an appreciation for the reciprocal relationship between arts organisations and the communities around them.

My love for ballet is intertwined with my belief that, as a society, we need the arts. So, when I was tapped on the shoulder and invited to join the Foundation Board Northern Chapter in 2017, I knew it was the right time.

It's been seven years now and I can honestly say that the community of people that surrounds the ballet is one of the most unique, warm, well-intentioned, and passionate groups of people I've come across.

What were your first impressions of the Foundation Board?

At the time, I remember being struck by the strong culture between the Foundation Board, the company and the Philanthropy team, in terms of the integrity of the individuals and the level of commitment being demonstrated. This hasn't left me.

The role of the Foundation Board is significant in what it contributes to the culture of an organisation anywhere, but in particular at The Australian Ballet, because the opportunity to be closely involved with the company affords a depth of relationship with our supporters that a lot of organisations don't have the opportunity to offer.

The Australian Ballet is very transparent about communicating the needs, the goals and the objectives of the company. By sharing these with those around us, we [the Foundation Board] hope to inspire others to join the journey and support these ambitions through philanthropy.

A word that I associate heavily with what we contribute is 'legacy'. It's a privilege to be able to create a legacy, not only in a personal sense, but in the knowledge that our contribution now will have an impact on the future, just as those people who came before us have left their indelible mark on our company.

“There is no other Artistic Director like David and no other company of dancers like ours”

Jane Freudenstein AM, Foundation Board Chair

We're at a pivotal time in the company's history. What are you most motivated by as we move into this period?

I'm so excited to see the company continue to evolve, and that requires me to reflect on how much positive change has taken place in the last three to four years. In part, that is obviously associated with the work David Hallberg is doing, but it's also a natural part of the company coming of age and celebrating its 60th anniversary.

I'm also looking forward to seeing everything that comes with the company moving to the Regent Theatre in Melbourne – to see us adapt, to be agile, to be creative and to innovate. Yes, there will be financial challenges but there will equally be creative opportunity and that is the most exciting thing.

With that in mind, how will the Foundation Board enable the ambitions of the company and David Hallberg's artistic vision?

By mirroring the energy David shows us and by continuing to rise to both the challenge of raising funds in an ever-changing environment, as well as building our community in line with artistic programming and choices that are new and surprising.

David's vision and passion for the company and the art form is so energising. All we want is for David, the company and our dancers to succeed, so we're being as brave, as bold and as ambitious as he is.

We are listening to our networks and identifying people who we think will appreciate the work David is doing, the direction the company is taking and the leadership David's demonstrating in the arts, locally and internationally, and we are inviting them to join this incredible journey with us.

Finally, what does being a member of the Foundation Board mean to you?

I think I'm one of the luckiest people in the world. I get to participate in and be an audience member of The Australian Ballet – one of the world's leading arts organisations. We represent beauty and joy, community and passion, and the highest artistic integrity. It's an absolute privilege to be involved.

In my view, there is no other Artistic Director like David and no other company of dancers like ours. As the company evolves, we're welcoming international artists and continuing to create extraordinary repertoire with funding from philanthropy. We're providing opportunities for dancers to travel to the UK and learn from choreographers and creatives, and for those renowned artistic teams to come to Australia and lead ours ... that really is the pinnacle and deeply rewarding, for all involved.

A ballerina in a pink leotard and white tutu is captured in a graceful ballet pose. She is standing on her right leg, with her left leg extended horizontally to the left. Her arms are raised, with the right arm extended to the right and the left arm raised high and slightly curved. The background consists of a wall with horizontal wooden slats and a wooden ballet barre. The lighting is soft and even, highlighting the dancer's form and the texture of her tutu.

An eternal love

Grace Carroll
Photo Pierre Toussaint

Talking Pointe

Two years on from our 2022 Supporter Survey, we spoke to Emilia Cross, a retired educator, now seasoned tour guide at Melbourne's Old Treasury Building, about her connection to the art form, commitment to The Australian Ballet and the special place the State Theatre occupies in her heart.



Emilia Cross

Emilia Cross can trace her love of the arts back to her early childhood in Italy, where she lived until her family emigrated to Australia when she was 10. "I heard my first opera on a school excursion when I was seven. It was Verdi's *Rigoletto*. The beautiful sounds of the two arias, *Questa o quella* and *Caro nome* made a great impression on me at the time, and I fell in love with opera there and then. For a while I even wanted to be an opera singer!"

The beauty of ballet didn't come into Emilia's world, however, until her husband, Dr. James Cross, introduced her in the 1970s. "James was a lifelong ballet lover and, one day, when we came back from the USA where he had completed his PhD in mathematical fields, he suggested that we go to see The Australian Ballet at the Palais Theatre."

In the decades that followed, going to the ballet became a treasured pastime for Emilia and James, who became subscribers and regularly attended together until 2017, when James passed away.

The couple particularly enjoyed the company's performances of the classical narrative ballets. *Giselle* has long been a favourite work for Emilia, a production she has frequently travelled around the world to see and *The Merry Widow* brought great joy to James, who loved the work of Marilyn Rowe and Lucette Aldous.

It was around 2017 when Emilia began to think about commemorating James' love for the art form and their shared history with and affection for the company. In doing so, Emilia made the decision to celebrate her and James' shared passion for ballet by remembering The Australian Ballet in her will. "It's something I wanted to do in memory of James and because I want The Australian Ballet to continue being super-duper fabulous."

Poignantly, James and Emilia's special connection to ballet continues to live-on in the space where so many of their memories were made together. "We had the same seats from when the company moved to the State Theatre in 1988, so I had a plaque made for James. It reads, *In Memory of Dr. James Cross, Lover of Ballet* and is located in front of the seat where he used to sit, and which has now become my seat. I hope to have a plaque for me next to his eventually."

Emilia continues to follow the company to this day, and now enjoys attending performances with her friend and neighbour Michael, a dancer and artist who she met at a ballet class back in the 1980's. "*Oscar*® will be our annual trip to the theatre together this year and I am so looking forward to seeing something that is so new."

For more than 30 years, The Australian Ballet has been fortunate to receive gifts of all sizes from members of our Ballet family who, like Emilia, choose to remember the company and their affection for ballet in their will.

If you would like to have a confidential conversation about including The Australian Ballet in your will, please get in contact.

Jane Harris

Planned Giving Manager
VIC, TAS, SA & WA
T 03 9669 2782
E janeh@australianballet.com.au

Sonia Brennan

Planned Giving Manager
NSW, ACT & QLD
T 02 9253 5316
E soniab@australianballet.com.au

Ballet Family events

Regent Seven Seas Cruises Patrons Tour

17 January 2024, Seven Seas Explorer®

For members of our supporter community the New Year started in style with an exclusive lunch hosted by Regent Seven Seas Cruises, one of The Australian Ballet's luxury travel partners.

The group of special guests were treated to a private gourmet lunch of premium food and wines on board the luxurious Seven Seas Explorer while it was docked in Melbourne. This was a rare opportunity to have an exclusive tour of the most luxurious and premium ship in the Regent Seven Seas fleet. The tour included views of some of the 377 suite accommodations, the two-level theatre, eight restaurants, health spa and outdoor area with an infinity pool. It was a spectacular event that provided a premium cruise journey that few travellers get to experience.



(L-R Anton Gaudry, Jenny Gaudry, Lisa Pile (Regent Seven Seas), June Jens, John Fullerton, Meg Pocock, Neil Jens, Kim Burnett, Andrew Wright, Kenneth Watkins AM, Christine Campbell, Terry Campbell, Igor Zambelli, Lissa Twomey

Ballet Ambassador Summer Drinks

1 February 2024, in Toorak
 9 February 2024, in Point Piper

Our Ballet Ambassadors gathered to signal the start of Season 2024 with two special evenings of canapés and refreshments, hosted at the homes of Southern Chapter Co-Chair, Nina Aberdeen and Northern Chapter member, Meg Tudehope.



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



8.



7.

- 1. Guests gathered on a beautiful summer's evening with David Hallberg as guest of honour
- 2. (L-R) Aidan Tudehope, Lucas Pontifex, Katherine Pontifex
- 3. (L-R) Penny Maragiannis-Kyros, Angela Potts, John Maragiannis
- 4. (L-R) Southern Chapter Co-Chairs, Penny Barlow and Nina Aberdeen
- 5. (L-R) Northern Chapter Co-Chairs, Susie Nugan and Leah Bischoff
- 6. (L-R) Sarah Shannon, Katherine Hesse, Kate Griffiths, Sharon Bennie, Dr Sarah Tolerton, Hannah Hesse, Shauna Anderson
- 7. Guests heard from Nina Aberdeen and Penny Barlow about the year ahead
- 8. (L-R) Sarah Ingham, Joye Rastogi, Meg Tudehope

THE PHILANTHROPY TEAM

If you have any questions about how your generosity is supporting The Australian Ballet of today and tomorrow, please get in touch.

Kenneth Watkins AM
Philanthropy Director
03 9669 2780
kennethw@australianballet.com.au

Jasmine Mansfield
Executive Assistant to Philanthropy Director
& Special Events Coordinator
03 9669 2732
jasminem@australianballet.com.au

Adam Santilli
Head of Philanthropy &
Patrons Manager – SA
03 9669 2784
adams@australianballet.com.au

Louise Topple
Philanthropy Manager Foundation Board
& Special Projects
03 9669 2785
louiset@australianballet.com.au

Andrew Wright
Philanthropy Manager – VIC, TAS & WA
03 9669 2735
andreww@australianballet.com.au

Jane Harris
Planned Giving Manager
– VIC, TAS, SA & WA
03 9669 2782
janeh@australianballet.com.au

Clea Caisley
Philanthropy Manager – NSW, ACT & QLD
02 9253 5317
cleac@australianballet.com.au

Sonia Brennan
Planned Giving Manager
– NSW, ACT & QLD
02 9253 5316
soniab@australianballet.com.au

Elle Cahill
Patrons Manager
02 9253 5309
ellec@australianballet.com.au

David Wynne
Ballet Ambassador Program
02 9253 5311
davidw@australianballet.com.au

Kasey Lack
Senior Philanthropy Coordinator
kaseyl@australianballet.com.au

Lara Jones
Philanthropy Services Coordinator – NSW
laraj@australianballet.com.au

General Enquiries
1300 752 900
philanthropyservices@australianballet.com.au



Artists of The Australian Ballet, *Études* (Lander) 2024
Photo Daniel Boud

PHILANTHROPY EVENTS

Supporters and patrons are invited to attend a range of special events each season. If you would like to find out more, please contact us.

Event Enquiries

1300 752 900

philanthropyevents@australianballet.com.au

Talking Pointe edited by

Hannah Cheale

Graphic Design

Edita Knowler

Talking Pointe is made from 30% recycled materials from sustainably managed sources.



Scan this QR code to learn more about the power of philanthropy at The Australian Ballet.



Principal
Partner

THE
AUSTRALIAN
BALLET





THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

PHILANTHROPY