

NEWSLETTER FOR PATRONS | WINTER 2020

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

TALKING POINTE





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

Welcome



NATASHA BOWNESS

President,
Annual Giving

As I sat down to write my introduction for the last issue of *Talking Pointe* I could not have imagined what lay in store for us in 2020, or how significantly the world would change.

The COVID-19 pandemic has closed venues, cancelled live performances and forced many cultural institutions into perilous conditions. However, while audiences have found themselves staying home to stay safe, it is the arts that have been instrumental in bringing communities even closer together in their time of need.

This year has certainly tested our patience and resolve. It's been difficult, but it has also reaffirmed that the culture and creativity of The Australian Ballet will always find a way to flourish. Despite facing the biggest challenge in its history, the company has done a fantastic job of adapting in this time of immense change to ensure audiences can continue to enjoy ballet while the curtain's been down. From a wonderfully curated digital season, At Home with Ballet TV, to online adult dance classes and an online version of the Education and Outreach program, there's been something for everyone.

I've loved hearing your stories about how these digital programs have helped you and your families enjoy the ballet and feel more connected while you have been physically apart. I've also been delighted to hear about the number of new members joining our philanthropic community. This period has put a strain on everyone, so to learn that so many of you have been compelled to make your first gift to help sustain us beyond the pandemic has been deeply humbling.

I would like to acknowledge David McAllister, who has provided such compassionate leadership to our dancers and community during a period of such uncertainty. I know many of us – myself included – have taken great delight in following his *Dancing with David* video series from the comfort of our homes. I would also like to thank Lady Potter, President Emeritus of Annual Giving, for her guidance and generosity through this time.

Testament to the outstanding leadership of the organisation is the news that our very own Libby Christie and Dr Sue Mayes have been recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, both receiving an AM (Member in the Order of Australia). I'm sure you will agree that this is a well-deserved recognition of their extraordinary leadership

in the arts, and their profound impact on The Australian Ballet as well as on our dancers' lives.

To you – our devoted Ballet family – thank you. Your unconditional commitment to The Australian Ballet during recent events has brought us great comfort and strength. We are eternally grateful for the way you have put your arms around the dancers, the company and the art form we all cherish. Thanks to you, we will emerge stronger and more vibrant than ever before.

Like you, I feel that my passion for the company is stronger than ever, as is my confidence in its future. I was excited to learn of David Hallberg's appointment as incoming artistic director, and eagerly await the next chapter in The Australian Ballet's story under his direction. Until then, I hope you enjoy turning the pages of this issue of *Talking Pointe* and reading about the many milestones and heart-warming stories from the first half of this very remarkable year.

Natasha Bowness
President, Annual Giving

There's no time like the present to make a difference



KENNETH WATKINS
Philanthropy Director

“Thank you for staying by our side and for being part of our future.”

What a year it has been. Certainly not the one we expected!

We spent a lot of 2019 busily planning for our Year of Limitless Possibilities, which was to have been complemented by a flourish of galas, events, dinners and bespoke performances to farewell David McAllister and raise money in his name. In part that happened, and the brief celebrations were unmistakably fulfilling and deeply meaningful. But then along came COVID-19 ...

I was poised to go to London to host a dinner with people who might be interested in establishing a new foundation there, The Australian Ballet's UK Foundation, when the news of the pandemic gathered momentum locally. The company and audiences alike were grateful to see the curtain go up on the electrifying opening weekend of *Volt* on 13 March and delighted to see it receive five-star reviews. Unfortunately, by the Saturday night, David McAllister was forced to announce the end of the run – only three shows after its premiere. By 16 March we were entering lockdown mode and working from home.

Overnight everything stopped and suddenly, without ticket sales, philanthropy was the only steady source of income for The Australian Ballet.

Naturally, this has been a very concerning time for us all – the company, our audiences and our

patrons. Nonetheless, despite such uncertain times and the biggest challenge we've faced in 58 years, we have been enveloped by such warmth and generosity from our ever-expanding philanthropic community.

Some of our supporters have been in the position to give more, others have reduced their gifts but still contributed, while many have given for the first time. Regardless, from everyone at The Australian Ballet – the dancers, musicians, artisans and everyone behind the scenes – thank you. It has been incredible to witness such phenomenal support and know that we are all in this together.

Sustaining us today is a shared love of our national ballet company – one that can be traced back to September 1962 when The Australian Ballet's tradition of philanthropy began, just a few weeks after the company was founded. Since those early days, we have made it a priority to invest in and build a philanthropy program that has, in turn, provided a solid foundation for the company.

A cornerstone of this foundation is our Planned Giving program, which this year celebrates its 30th anniversary. The long-term impact of this program is truly transformational, and the funds from generous patrons who have left a gift to The Australian Ballet in their will have been instrumental in sustaining our company through the pandemic for future generations.



Valerie Tereshchenko and Robyn Hendricks.
Photography Kate Longley

Our Annual Giving program has also continued to underpin the company's everyday activities by directly supporting our dancers and maintaining our daily operations - ensuring we're able to pick up where we left off when the curtain goes up again in our theatres.

While we are unable to predict what will be in store for us next year, we know that dance will continue to be a vital part of Australians' lives. Much of what audiences have delighted in seeing on stage in the past 20 years has been hugely supported by philanthropy. Plans are well underway for the 2021 season with our next

Artistic Director David Hallberg at the helm, and philanthropy will continue to be a driving force - ensuring we can embrace our 59th year and kick off our 60th anniversary with a bang.

Never has philanthropy been so important to The Australian Ballet. Which is why it's incredibly rewarding to be in discussion with some of our patrons about gifts that will lift our creative bar even higher, including Lady Potter who will shortly announce a very generous gift in partnership with some of her closest friends. There are exciting plans in train that will ensure our future is vibrant.

Clearly no one wants to lose what we have, and it's been heart-warming to experience the sense of togetherness as the company and its supporters unite to weather the storm and emerge from it even stronger. Thank you for staying by our side and for being part of our future.

Kenneth Watkins
Philanthropy Director



SHOOTING STAR

OUR 2020 SEASON
WAS CUT SHORT,
BUT IT BURNT BRIGHTLY.

There is always anticipation as a new season begins, but there was particular buzz around the start of our Year of Limitless Possibilities.

The Happy Prince, a new work made for our company by Graeme Murphy, had been delayed due to Graeme's ill-health, but over the summer it had quickly taken shape; as we watched dancers in dragonfly wings and towering wigs flit in and out of the studio, expectations built. Graeme and his long-time creative partner Janet Vernon were in their element, fostering an atmosphere of trust and experimentation as they taught the dancers to fly on wires and move like dolls.

The world premiere of *The Happy Prince* in Brisbane kicked off our 2020 season. Several patrons travelled from interstate to see it, and our Brisbane fans were out in force. The curtain came up, and without the interruption of an interval, we were able to revel in this vivid gem of a ballet. Like Oscar Wilde's story, it moved us to laughter and tears. Kim Carpenter's stunning bright designs were like the pages of a fairytale opening and disgorging its weird and wonderful characters, and Christopher Gordon's specially commissioned score thrummed with incident and emotion.

At the after party, attended by many ballet luminaries, the Murphys were inundated with well-wishers, including former principal artists Lana Jones and Daniel Gaudiello.

After a successful run of *The Happy Prince*, we returned to Melbourne to open our contemporary program *Volt*.

The threat of COVID-19, which only weeks ago had seemed so distant, was drawing ever closer. Events moved with frightening speed, and after three performances, Arts Centre Melbourne closed its doors.

All those who were fortunate enough to attend those performances will never forget them. Crisis can heighten artistry, and the dancers flung themselves into the headlong choreography of Wayne McGregor in *Chroma* and *Dyad 1929*, with the musicians of Orchestra Victoria matching their precision and attack in the pit. A particularly emotional highlight was the world premiere of Alice Topp's *Logos*, which struck straight to the heart with its passionate pas de deux and cinematic staging. It was an extraordinary moment in the company's history.

As we head back to the studio, we vow to make our return to the stage every bit as extraordinary. See you in the theatre!

Ballet Family Events

BALLET FAMILY LUNCH
 Greenfields, Albert Park,
 Melbourne, 18 February 2020

The Australian Ballet Foundation Board and Ballet Ambassadors hosted a lunch to bring together family and friends who share a passion for ballet and the company.



Nina Aberdeen*, Maria Pannozzo*, Helen Mantzis, Anna Findlay, Evelyn Yong, Penny Barlow, Lynne Wright*, Karen Morrison*, David McAllister, Lisa Bolte and Prue Brown*

*The Australian Ballet Foundation Board. Photography Tim Carrafa.



Amber Scott, David McAllister and Adam Bull held a heart-warming Q&A for guests



David with current and former ballerinas Kathy Heathcote, Amber Scott, Rachel Rawlins, Lisa Pavane, Olivia Bell, Lisa Bolte, and Jane Beddoe



Designer Kit Willow speaking about her costume collaboration with the company

MCALLISTER GALA DINNER
 Lyrebird Restaurant, Queensland Performing Arts Centre
 Tuesday 25 February 2020



Rhonda Sheehy and Julie-Anne Standfield

On the opening night of *The Happy Prince* in Brisbane, patrons and friends of The Australian Ballet gathered to celebrate and farewell our Artistic Director David McAllister, in the first of a series of gala dinners. The Governor of Queensland, the Premier of Queensland, and the Arts Minister of Queensland were in attendance.



The Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Premier of Queensland; David McAllister AM; and His Excellency the Hon Paul de Jersey AC QC, Governor of Queensland

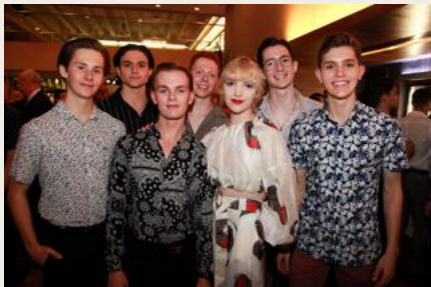


Natasha Bowness (President Annual Giving), Kathy Nowik and Christine Thevathasan

THE WORLD PREMIERE OF GRAEME MURPHY'S THE HAPPY PRINCE
 Queensland Performing Arts Centre, Tuesday 25 February 2020



Rosanna Chalk and friends



Dancers (L-R) Daniel Byrne, Jett Ramsay, Tyson Powell, Jacob de Groot, Sara Andrlon, Adam Elmes, Thomas McClintock



Michael Robertson*, Jett Ramsay, Robin Campbell* Foundation Board Southern Chapter Chair and Bob Valentine



Paul Knobloch and Lana Jones



Frances Thomas and Amber Scott



Dancers (L-R) Imogen Chapman, Montana Rubin and Jill Ogai



Jodie Maunder* and Kenneth Watkins



Evie Ferris, Laurie Cowled and Riley Lapham

*The Australian Ballet Foundation Board.

BALLET AMBASSADOR SUMMER DRINKS Rockleigh, Point Piper, Sunday 1 March 2020



Sarah Ingham*, David McAllister and Jo Newton



David McAllister, Ellie Aitken, and Philippa Harvey-Sutton

Ballet Ambassadors gathered after the summer break to celebrate the start of the new ballet year and to hear about the 2020 season from David McAllister AM.

LES ETOILES DINNER – MELBOURNE Lisa Bolte Dancers’ Lounge, Primrose Potter Australian Ballet Centre 5 March 2020



Peter Reilly, Sue Sweetland, Jade Wood, Marcus Morelli and Susan Morgan



Brett Chynoweth, Lisa Bolte and Graeme Uthmeyer



Amy Harris, Igor and Jenny Zambelli, Peter James, Dimity Azoury



Ben Lee, Angie Carter and Colin Carter*



Adam Bull, Jodie Maunder*, Amber Scott, Ty King-Wall

*The Australian Ballet Foundation Board.



EXIT STAGE LEFT

DAVID MCALLISTER ON HIS LAST YEAR
WITH THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET.

It was always going to be a remarkable year for David McAllister and, as The Australian Ballet's inimitable artistic director prepares to move on after four decades, he agrees that it has been a year like no other. But, while it may not have been the swan song anyone was anticipating, he reflects with characteristic positivity on the events of recent months and what this means for the legacy of his directorship.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an extraordinary time – one that will always remind me of togetherness, of working together as a company to do all we could to respond to the challenges and emerge in great shape for the future. But also, importantly, togetherness with our supporters.

We certainly wouldn't be where we are without the support of our devoted philanthropic community and the foundation secured by establishing our philanthropy program in our early years. The strength of our community and its shared love of dance is undoubtedly helping us weather this storm.

Another sense of togetherness coming from this rather unusual period has been getting to spend so much time with David Hallberg, our incoming artistic director. Thankfully, David was able to get one of the last flights out of the UK before its borders closed, and he's been so great to work with. Neither of us have been in this unique position before, but we've both enjoyed spending this time together and the opportunities we might not otherwise have had to work so closely and collaboratively have been great for communication, continuity and creativity. Equally,

to see David come in with fresh eyes at such a pivotal time has been invigorating. It's so exciting to see his energy, passion and drive, as well as how his different experiences and different ideas are starting to come to life. He's exactly the right person for the job and I'm looking forward to handing the privilege on to him.

Personally speaking, in some ways this has been a great time to prepare for my life after The Australian Ballet. Usually, at this point, we'd be in Sydney doing eight shows a week in the theatre every night. Instead of that I've been at home cooking and having nights off. It's been an enforced slip down the slope to retirement and, in that way, it's been fantastic to have some time to reflect and to adjust to a different pace of life. I've found I've enjoyed using some of that time to do domestic things: I've been reading books and watching some



I'm also working on a production of *Swan Lake* with the Finnish National Ballet. They say that when you leave a job you have to build a boat to sail out on. Well, I'll be sailing on my boat to Finland. That's been moving along, despite the pandemic, and the production is taking shape - costumes and sets are being made as we speak. I'm still doing some work on editing the score for the version we're going to use, and then I'll be heading into the studio to work on the steps. I was half-expecting the production to be delayed due to COVID-19, but that doesn't seem to be the case. All going well I'll be heading out to Finland ready for the premiere in February 2021.

Reflecting on my time as artistic director, one of the main things I wanted to achieve in the role was to build a culture that celebrates our uniqueness and 'Australianness'. The Australian Ballet proudly reflects Australia in all that we do and, when you come to see us perform, I'm happy that you now see that on stage as well.

I've also tried to support the touring company so that they're able to have a life and a family alongside ballet. The parental leave policy that we instituted during my tenure (which was by no means purely my own work), is a legacy that continues and is one of which I'm very proud. In that same vein, the artistic health and wellbeing of the company has developed a lot over these past 20 years, and I think we now have the best ballet health team in the world. Once again, this isn't all my doing, but it is something I really wanted us to be leaders in. Today, thanks to Dr Sue Mayes and her team, we are still finding new ways to support the dancers, and to help our orchestra to be strong, healthy and balanced. I love that.

People are always going to have an opinion, but I do believe the company is in a strong artistic position. I hope I've built on the legacy of past directors and established a great platform for David Hallberg to continue that work.

shows on Netflix and I've developed quite an obsession with baking. It's made me realise that, while life after The Ballet won't be as full, it will be just fine, and I'll definitely be busy.

Writing my memoir, *Soar - A Life Freed by Dance*, with writer Amanda Dunn, has been fascinating and truly eye-opening. It's been like dipping my toe into another art form, which really is quite wonderful, and it was a fantastic thing to do during my down hours over the past

months. Writing the book has been a surprisingly cathartic experience and it brought up a lot of memories I hadn't visited for a while. In a job like this you spend a lot of time being forensically interrogated about your career, but I decided that I wanted to write about my private life for a change. I wanted to touch on my relationship with Wesley - tell the story about how we met, and the life behind my job; I didn't want it to be dull. I'm really looking forward to sharing it with everyone.



1. David McAllister
2. Jake Mangakahia, Valerie Tereshchenko and Callum Linnane
3. Valerie Tereshchenko, Callum Linnane and David McAllister

All photography by Kate Longley

Soar - A Life Freed by Dance by David McAllister with Amanda Dunn will be available to purchase from October 2020.



And the Beat Goes On

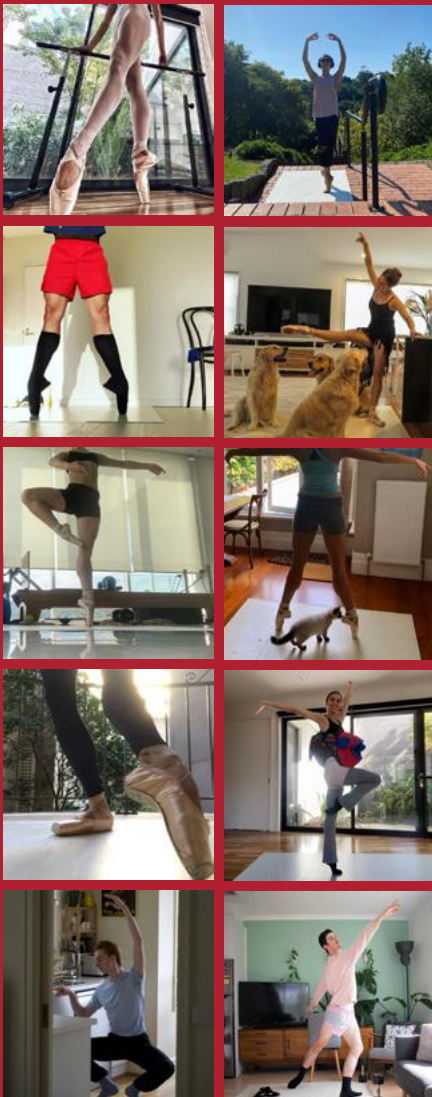
WORKING FROM HOME
THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET WAY.



Alex Wyatt

Senior Artistic Co-ordinator

People the world over have adjusted to a new way of living and working during the pandemic. The dancers, the Artistic team and the Artistic Health team of The Australian Ballet are no different – although their set-up is. We caught up with Senior Artistic Co-ordinator Alex Wyatt to find out how our dancers have adapted to ‘dancing from home’ and managed to maintain artistic excellence as well as a caring, vibrant culture.



Setting up for success

When the dancers were sent home, the company literally chopped up the vinyl flooring from an old set into 1 metre by 1.5 metre lengths. Members of staff spent time running door-to-door deliveries to anyone unable to collect the floor themselves to ensure everyone was set up. What’s been amazing to see is how some dancers have ‘MacGyvered’ their own settings by enhancing their spaces with other everyday items, such as gym flooring. They’re a very inventive bunch!

Maintaining a regular routine

We managed a pretty seamless transition of our routine to suit the needs of the ‘new normal’. Ever since we moved to our homes, the dancers have been taking class daily at 11am for an hour and a half. Using Microsoft Teams, our workplace collaboration platform, everyone has been able to sign in and do class with a member of artistic staff in Melbourne and a pianist, who plays from their home on an electric keyboard. The Artistic team’s admin staff are on stand-by to troubleshoot any hiccups along the way. It’s been fantastic to see everyone dancing along from home every day.

Prioritising wellbeing

The dancers’ physical and mental wellbeing has been a huge priority since day one. Our Welfare and Development Co-ordinator Sam Wright oversees our wellbeing program and from the moment we were working from home, he and members of the ballet staff were calling every dancer every day to check in on how they were feeling emotionally, physically and technically. One-on-one coaching with artistic staff has also been on offer to all dancers – ensuring they have a forum to work through any challenges from class, balletically or wellness-wise. It’s been so important that we do all we can to make sure everyone feels loved and supported and valued.

Harnessing technology

Thanks to Dr Sue Mayes and the Artistic Health team, who have been hard at work behind the scenes as well, we have built an online library of nearly 100 recorded classes and exercise tutorials for the dancers to use as and when they want.

The exercise tutorials were filmed in a range of locations – from homes and parks around Melbourne, to The Primrose Potter Ballet Centre, adhering to social distancing protocol of course. And they are as fun as they are functional; they use everyday household items to demonstrate everything from shoulder stability to knee hyperextension control.

Culture club

Whether we’re at the Ballet Centre or on the road, we’re proud to be part of a tight-knit, fun and caring culture. The past few months have been no different and, over this time we’ve built ourselves quite the schedule to help make up for the social moments we were missing.

- Mondays are quiz day with Adam Bull assuming the role of Quiz Master to lead the company through the *Herald Sun* Super Quiz.
- Tuesdays have become the day when readers get together, thanks to a book club Benedicte Bemet set up to help share her love of reading.
- Thursdays are now ‘Theme Thursdays’ an idea Amber Scott initiated. Each week she’ll draw a theme out of a hat to decide the order of the day. It’s really captured everyone’s imaginations! A notable highlight was when Steven Heathcote enlisted the help of wardrobe to create a ‘Superhero Steve’ outfit for Superheroes Week.
- Our weeks are now rounded out with Friday afternoon cooking classes, where two dancers will take the lead and run their own cooking show for the rest of the company, who cook along at home. David McAllister recently impressed with a demonstration of his personal favourite, tuna mornay.

Staying together while being apart

The biggest shock for everyone has been not living in each other’s pockets – quite an adjustment when you’re used to travelling together and sharing everything for six months of the year. What’s been wonderful – and perhaps the most surprising thing to come out of this for me – is that, even though it’s been tough to be apart from each other, the connection we’ve found via our daily classes and team activities have brought us even closer together as a Ballet family.

40 YEARS OF THE REGIONAL TOUR

Necessity is the mother of invention.

At a time when people, organisations and communities are innovating and adapting to survive a global pandemic, this proverb rings truer now than it has ever done. Rewind nearly 60 years and the origins of the Regional Tour can be traced back to another period of uncertainty that catalysed creative solutions for sustaining the company.

In 1962, shortly after The Australian Ballet began performing with *Swan Lake*, touring to Sydney, Adelaide, Perth and New Zealand, the money ran out. Instead of shutting up shop, our Artistic Director Peggy van Praagh adapted her approach. She purchased two trucks, split the dancers into two groups and sent them on the road to tour 40 towns across Tasmania, Victoria and South Australia.

Two decades later, in 1980, The Dancers Company was formally established by Artistic Director Marilyn Jones in collaboration with The Australian Ballet School's director, Margaret Scott, to give regional audiences access to the same productions that were

presented in our capital cities – ensuring geography was not a barrier to experiencing world-class ballet. The tour also gave final-year students from The Australian Ballet School the chance to go out on the road and have a real-life experience that would help them transition into the professional dancing world.

Joanne Michel, Graduate Year Teacher and Ballet Mistress, Regional Tour at The Australian Ballet School, was one of the first seven professional dancers selected for The Dancers Company's 1980 regional tour. As someone who is now responsible for escorting the Ballet School's Level 8 students on tour, she is a true advocate for the touring experience and the solid grounding it provides for students and professionals alike.

"The Regional Tour is the birthplace of the dancer. Being on stage for eight shows a week, observing role-model behaviours and learning to be adaptive and resilient through the challenges of touring present a great springboard to learn how to be a professional in the industry. Likewise, the professional dancers who tour embrace the opportunity to learn through performing principal roles to live audiences, often for the first time."

Over the years, as regional Australia invested in building theatres and facilities, the tour's footprint has expanded, enabling us to take smaller versions of the company's classical repertoire, complete with costumes and sets, to a wider variety of people and communities. The tour has also evolved to offer a range of community engagement events in the form of masterclasses in local studios, behind-the-scenes access to the dancers' daily class and open classes for local dance students.

As we are Australia's national ballet company, regional Australia is as important to us today as it has ever been. As of 2020, the Regional Tour has performed in 90 locations across the country, entertaining almost 80,000 audience members since 2012 and giving 103 performances in the past five years alone.

As Artistic Director David McAllister explains,

"The Regional Tour is a vital link to audiences who love ballet around the country. It has been the experience that's inspired so many dancers through their careers and, in turn, has been inspiration for so many children from regional Australia who have then joined the company."

Our Artistic Health Administrator Sarah Thompson attended a Regional Tour performance in her hometown of Toowoomba QLD in 1998 and set her sights on a future with the company. "I saw The Dancers Company perform in Toowoomba at the Empire Theatre when I was 11. I had studied ballet since I was four years old but hadn't seen 'real ballet' live, although I'd watched the occasional VHS. Watching Lucinda Dunn perform Kitri in *Don Quixote* was a huge event and a pivotal experience for me. She was incredible and I was in awe of the show so, when Lucinda came and took a class at my ballet school the next day, it really piqued my interest; I knew ballet was what I wanted for my future."

Shortly after this experience, Sarah successfully auditioned for The Australian Ballet School where she took part in two Regional Tours herself and, in time, graduated to The Australian Ballet. Sarah was with the company from 2008 to 2019 and is now working in the Artistic Health team while studying nutrition and training to be a clinical nutritionist. Her life is just one of many that has been touched and galvanised by our appearances across the country.

More recently, as the world has felt the effects of COVID-19, we have been unable to deliver our Regional Tour. In spite of this, and thanks to a new Virtual Mentoring Program developed with our Principal Partner Telstra, we have still been able to connect with and inspire the next generation of ballet dancers from the towns scheduled for the Tour, as well as extending our reach to other parts of regional Australia.

Thankfully, while the impact of the pandemic has forced a touring hiatus in 2020, plans are already taking shape for 2021. With the support of our wonderful philanthropic community, including Lord Glendonbrook, who started the Regional Touring Fund in 2016, we look forward to bringing the joy of ballet back to rural and regional communities as soon as we can - increasing accessibility to the company's repertoire and deepening our contribution to cultural life.



Miriki Performing Arts.
Photography Mimi Tanaka

BRINGING BALLET TO THE BUSH

In 2019 we invited you to support our Season of Giving campaign to help us bring ballet to the bush and deliver the magic of dance to rural and regional communities throughout Australia.

We would like to thank all our generous supporters who helped us raise over \$60,000 to support our activities in regional Australia. Gifts were matched dollar for dollar by a long-term supporter who is incredibly passionate about providing educational opportunities for young people, regardless of their circumstance.

We believe it is vital to create more opportunities for children in rural areas to attend performances and workshops and discover the joy of dance. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, we haven't been able to hit the road as planned this year, but we have every intention of resuming touring in 2021.



AMY HARRIS
Principal Artist

"As a young girl growing up in Ararat, I could only dream of joining The Australian Ballet. Today, as a mother of two and someone who has been fortunate to realise my dream, I truly appreciate the importance of creating opportunities for children in regional communities to have access to the arts. Thank you for supporting the next generation by bringing ballet to the bush."

Virtual mentoring for young regional dancers

WITH TELSTRA'S SUPPORT, WE REACH OUT TO ASPIRING BALLET DANCERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

Budding ballet dancers across the country have had the unique opportunity to be mentored by one of The Australian Ballet's artists from the comfort of their own living room, thanks to a new Virtual Mentoring Program developed with our Principal Partner Telstra.

We have been unable to deliver our Regional Tour in the exceptional circumstances of 2020, but it is still vital for us to remain connected to regional Australia and ensure we can inspire the next generation of ballet dancers. With Telstra's help, we have been able to harness the power of technology and connect with students from the towns scheduled for the Tour – Hobart, Launceston, Dandenong, Ballarat, Warrnambool, Horsham, Renmark, Port Pirie and Geelong – as well as extending well beyond to other parts of regional Australia including Alice Springs (NT), Mackay (QLD) and Bunbury (WA), to name but a few.

Regional ballet schools have been invited to nominate their most advanced and talented students to participate in this specialised program, which connects students via video conference to a mentor from The Australian Ballet.

Male and female students were provided with a short piece of ballet choreography to learn – the variations of the famous Peasant Pas de deux from *Giselle*. This choreography is the focus of the one-on-one virtual mentoring sessions, and our dancers have helped their students to refine their performance over a three-week period.

This initiative has been inspiring and rewarding for all involved. It's been a delight to help foster the talent of some of Australia's most promising ballet dancers and uphold our commitment to sharing the magic of dance, even when ballet studios are closed. With the help of our Principal Partner Telstra, we've experienced first-hand how ballet and technology can work together to inspire the next generation of ballet dancers.



MADISON SPARKMAN

13, Virtual Mentoring Program
participant from Ballarat, Victoria

“Throughout these hard times this program has been such a highlight, helping me to stay motivated and inspired. I have absolutely loved every second learning from it, I will remember the dancers' advice and cherish these memories forever! This program has really made a dream come true and I will be forever thankful for it.”



1. Madison Heidenreich, Hobart Tasmania
2. Brookelin Gill, Darwin
3. Madison Sparkman, Garage Arabesque

CONNECTING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH BALLET

Our Education and Outreach team get creative to support schools and communities



KATY MCKEOWN
Head of Education
and Outreach

“In such unsettling and uncertain times, it’s been more important than ever for us to continue our work in this area to provide consistency for teachers and students. Through the power of technology, we’ve successfully innovated, adapted and moved the program online, connecting with and inspiring young people across Australia.”

Every year our Education and Outreach program gives thousands of children across Australia the opportunity to experience the joy of dance for the very first time. Thanks to the generous support of our growing philanthropic community and corporate partners, this year has been no different, even though the circumstances of 2020 certainly have been.

STEAMDANCE

Our curriculum-linked flagship program, STEAMDANCE, explores science, technology, engineering, arts and maths through dance delivery.

During this period, STEAMDANCE has gone online to support Australian teachers and students via live virtual workshops – meaning that classes or groups can sign up to

join in regardless of where they’re located or whether students are at home or in school.

Students can get active and keep fit by taking part in live workshops with warm-ups and games, choreograph dances, and take part in cool-downs with professional dancers. They can then watch a professional performance based on the theme of resilience.

Since launching online, 60 primary and secondary schools across the nation have taken part in these interactive and inspiring sessions.

Wilaygu Ngayinybula // Possum’s Two Minds

Helping kids see beyond now, *Wilaygu Ngayinybula // Possum’s Two Minds* is our new Education & Outreach performance. The first of our First Nations commissions over three years, *Wilaygu Ngayinybula // Possum’s Two Minds* has been created especially for schools



by choreographer, member of our Corps de Ballet and proud Wiradjuri woman Ella Havelka.

Wilay is a possum with two minds. One is cheeky, fun and creative. The other is smart, serious and organised. Both minds have their place, but Wilay gets in trouble when Cheeky mind hibernates in the dry season. Wilay becomes weighed down by Serious mind, but Wilay need only remember that all seasons pass.

This message – that all seasons pass – has been particularly relevant and resonant in 2020, and more than 2,000 students viewed the performance during its week online.

Digital Resources

The Education and Outreach team have also created an online resource, EDUHUB, containing everything from brand new warm-up videos to educational materials linked to the curriculum and our performances.

Professional Development

Complementing the digital resource offering is The Australian Ballet’s Remote Leader Mentoring Program. This has been made available for teachers and community dance advocates via a dedicated Facebook page. The course features free training materials, lesson plans and virtual sessions to get communities and students dancing.



Both images on this page: *Wilaygu Ngayinybula // Possum’s Two Minds.* Education and Outreach performance. Photography Sophia Bender

Government Partner

Trust and Foundation Partners

Principal Partner



GREAT SCOTT

PRINCIPAL ARTIST AMBER SCOTT
REFLECTS ON HER BRILLIANT CAREER.



Andrew Wright
Planned Giving and
Patrons Representative,
NSW, QLD & ACT

Amber Scott has spent most of her life gracefully immersed in The Australian Ballet. In 1994, aged eleven, she moved to Melbourne with her family to enrol in The Australian Ballet School, where she graduated as dux. She joined The Australian Ballet in 2001 under the directorship of Ross Stretton.

Twenty years on, Amber is enjoying a rich and vibrant career with the company. She has been a principal artist since 2011 and is now studying the Graduate Diploma of Elite Dance Instruction at The Australian Ballet School, while continuing to delight colleagues and audiences with her performances.

At a time when many have been reflecting on their lives, Amber had a socially distanced catch-up with Andrew Wright – her life-long friend, a retired soloist of The Australian Ballet and now a member of the Philanthropy team – to reflect on her career to date and ambitions still to be realised.

Amber Scott. Photography Daniel Boud.

1. Amber as Aurora in David McAllister's *The Sleeping Beauty*. Photography Kate Longley
2. Amber outside The Australian Ballet Centre, 1991
3. Amber with Adam Bull in Wayne McGregor's *Dyad 1929*. Photography Branco Gaica
4. Amber with Ty King-Wall in Maina Gielgud's *Giselle*. Photography Jeff Busby



Amber, to many, you are The Australian Ballet. What is your first memory of joining the Ballet family?

I remember moving down to Melbourne to join The Australian Ballet School. I was one of the child extras in Graeme Murphy's *Nutcracker – The Story of Clara*. Going from the beaches of Queensland to performing on the State Theatre stage – what an experience that was! I was so giddy with excitement that I made my mum drive me up and down St Kilda Road after each performance.

What do you consider to be your break-out role?

Probably Odette in the Murphy *Swan Lake*. It was one of those productions you just knew was going to be special. Plus, I had the privilege to dance opposite Matthew Lawrence, who was very nurturing. In true Australian Ballet style, I went from debuting as Odette in the matinee to going back to a corps swan in the evening show, all in the one day. Such variation was all part of the learning curve.

Which roles have you enjoyed the most?

I always think of myself as a 'ballet girl', but I also really love the more contemporary works we perform. Working with Stephen Page on *Waramuk – in the dark night* and *Rites* was an incredible time with our company and Bangarra Dance Theatre performing together. These ballets opened my eyes to another way of moving.

I have great affection for Stephen Baynes and have been so lucky to dance in many of his most beautiful ballets, such as *Beyond Bach*, *Molto Vivace*, *Unspoken Dialogues* and *Swan Lake*. Odette in the Baynes and Murphy *Swan Lakes* will always hold a special place in my heart, and I loved performing *Manon* and *Onegin* intensely. These are the ballets dancers dream of dancing.

Talk to me about your partners. Which partnerships have been the most formative of your career?

Let me start with my very dear friend, Principal Artist Adam Bull. I first met Adam in my first year of The Australian Ballet School's Associate Program. Twenty-six years on we've had the pleasure of dancing together in so many incredible performances. Adam is such a joyous person, a generous artist and the most tender partner. Through all those wonderful years of pas de deux, his positivity and humour has kept us going. I would say we have grown up together.

My husband, Principal Artist Ty King-Wall, has also been a rather special partner for me on and off-stage. Funnily enough, we were cast in a lot of ballets before we started dating, but they never came about due to some reason or another. Once we found each other our ballet lives began to entwine more and we had the pleasure of dancing together in *Cinderella*, *Giselle*, *La Bayadère* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. I especially loved dancing *Swan Lake* in Ty's home country of New Zealand. That was really special.

I've also had the joy of being cast opposite David Hallberg in *Coppélia*, when he returned to the international stage after rehab with the company, as well as *Cinderella* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. What an honour that was! I'm very excited to see where David takes our company in the future.

Artistic Director David McAllister says ...

"I remember Amber when she joined the company. You could instantly see the seeds of the great ballerina she's become. She had an inner light that shone right from her days in the corps de ballet – a unique vulnerability and a great dramatic quality even then. It's been wonderful to see Amber blossom into the artist she is today, on stage and off stage. She's one of the most generous, caring and devoted company members you could ever want to meet. She really is like the Lilac Fairy – she's the perfect ballerina but she also bestows her goodness and kindness upon everyone that she comes across. She's a great ambassador and a great artist, and a great person as well."



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Over your time with the company, how has your interaction with and knowledge of our patrons shaped your career and changed the company?

It has been the greatest privilege to get to know our kind and generous patrons throughout my career. The passion they pour into the company is so uplifting. What is most special about the connections I've made is the way patrons have not only supported the company but have opened their hearts and homes to the dancers.

It was a real honour when Barbara Duhig became part of our Ballet family and my position as a principal artist was generously supported by her. And Lady Potter's support goes all the way back to the Ballet School where I received her scholarship in my first year. I would never have dreamt that one day my tiny daughter would be rolling around the floor of her lovely home while we chatted about the latest ballet news! Sharing in our patrons' lives has been something of a fairytale. So many adventures I will never forget and would never have experienced had it not been for meeting these amazing people through the ballet.

Reflecting on recent months when we've all had to adjust to a different way of life, how have you found this experience?

For me, the pandemic has been an opportunity to recharge and introduce a different way of thinking by building connections and sharing knowledge.

Participating in the Telstra Virtual Mentoring Program during this time, and starting my teacher training has also made me reflect on my journey. I've given a lot of thought to how fortunate I've been to have such inspirational teachers in my life. Learning from Marilyn Rowe, Marilyn Jones, Leigh Rowles and Gailene Stock taught me how important it is to teach with integrity and instil

the love of dance, not fear. I'm really enjoying this stage of my career. It feels like time to give back after I've been given so much. I learn a lot from the younger dancers. In particular the strength and fearlessness of youth, and their excitement at the beginning of their careers. It's infectious!

What has challenged you the most in your career?

It hasn't always been easy - there have been some tough times - but I've always felt motivated, loved what I've been doing, and known that part of the growth as an artist and human comes from the challenges along the way. Returning to work after having our little girl and greatest joy, Bonnie, for example, was a big effort! Ballet is an unforgiving art form, but I'm so blessed that the company does all it can to help you return to dance and support you at every step of the journey.

You have achieved so much already. What are your next ambitions?

I'm just so honoured to be here for my third artistic director! It is so exciting to be awaiting this new chapter, we are ready! I've adored working for David McAllister - he is such a kind and human director - I'll miss him lots. It's hard to put into words the memories of so many happy and formative times under his directorship.

Outside of work, I would love to walk the Queen Charlotte Track in New Zealand and the Camino de Santiago with Ty and Bonnie. We might need to wait until she's a little older before we can make that happen though!

Amber Scott. Photography Daniel Boud.



THE GIFT OF A LIFETIME

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF PLANNED GIVING.

“My Mum, Patricia Anders, fell in love with ballet from an early age. She danced herself well into her teens and adored watching ballet performances in Adelaide throughout her life until her last, on her 80th birthday in July 2018. Patricia so appreciated the many facets of ballet... the excitement of a captivating night performance with all its finery – the intricate costuming, stunning props and sets, the wonderful orchestral music and the company of dancers bringing the magic together! Mum was inspired to bequeath a gift to The Australian Ballet in her will, to enhance the development of future dancers and acknowledge the delight that ballet had brought her. She would be so proud to know that her final wish was granted, and her bequest has made a valuable difference at a particularly difficult time for the company.”

Verity Sneyd, daughter of Patricia Anders,
a lifelong supporter of The Australian Ballet



LIZ RUGGIERI
Planned Giving Manager
- VIC, TAS, WA & SA

“It’s a privilege to be part of this deeply personal and intimate journey people embark on, from thinking about the company’s future, to leaving a gift in their will to The Australian Ballet. Sadly, some are no longer with us, but I know from experience that their special gift reflected the joy they experienced from a lifetime of ballet.”

The year was 1990 and it was a bold time at The Australian Ballet. After building what is now The Primrose Potter Australian Ballet Centre, the company could sense that the future was brimming with potential and realised it was surrounded by a group of people who wanted to support us. A seed was sown, and the Planned Giving bequest program was born.

Within the year momentum was building and a small cohort of people had been engaged to become inaugural members of The Dame Peggy van Praagh Leadership Circle. Named in honour of the company’s visionary founding artistic director, the Leadership Circle continues to bring together like-minded people who enjoy unique opportunities to engage with the company.

Spring forward 30 years, and over 350 ballet lovers from around the country have notified The Australian Ballet of their decision to leave a gift to the company in their will. These bequests, which are capital-protected and account for 50% of The Australian Ballet’s endowment funds, are sustaining the company during the current period of uncertainty.

As Philanthropy Director Kenneth Watkins acknowledges,

“The long-term impact of this generosity is truly transformational. Our patrons’ life savings have been genuinely lifesaving in recent months. Endowed bequests have helped to sustain The Australian Ballet through the COVID-19 pandemic so we can continue to dance into 2021 and beyond.”

Income from bequests supports approximately \$500,000 of the company’s general operations each year. In addition to The Dame Peggy van Praagh Fund, established from her estate, the bequests of our generous philanthropic community have made several of our mainstage productions possible. In 2016, the General Bequests Fund supported *Coppélia* and *Nijinsky*; in 2017 The Frank and Thora Pearce Fund supported *Faster* and *Nutcracker* –

The Story of Clara; in 2018 The Melba Cromack Fund was established to produce *Cinderella*; The Arthur & Roma Norcott Fund was instrumental in the production of *Sylvia* in 2019.

These funds from generous individuals who have left a gift to the company in their will are an integral, important and valuable resource for the company. They create a solid foundation and sustain the company for future generations.

Looking to the future, The Australian Ballet aspires to be in the hearts and minds of our nation, and to inspire a sense of pride, ownership and warmth. So, when David McAllister surveyed our philanthropic community to see how many would follow his lead by making a provision in his will, we were delighted when nearly 700 respondents said they would.

Andrew Wright, Planned Giving & Patrons Representative summarises,

“The foresight of our supporters, demonstrated through their dedication to the Planned Giving program, sets us up for future success through steady growth. Such personal generosity will ensure we stand alongside the other great companies on the world stage and continue to be here for generations to come.”



Callum Linnane and Jake Mangakahia.
Photography Kate Longley

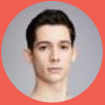
THE NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

MEET OUR 2020 RECRUITS.

Each year, we welcome a group of new dancers to the company, most of whom are entering professional life for the first time. In 2020 we have a bumper crop of nine fresh faces, all of them graduates of The Australian Ballet School. Several have had the opportunity to work with the company while they were still students, appearing as extras (hedges, caterpillar legs!) during the 2019 season of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*©.



Karina Arimura



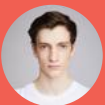
Adam Elmes



Thomas Gannon



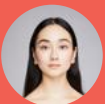
Benjamin Garrett



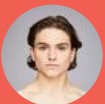
Alain Juelg



Larissa Kiyoto-Ward



Lilly Maskery



Jett Ramsay



Belle Urwin

Larissa, Belle, Lilly, Ben, Thomas, and Alain started with the company at the end of 2019 – the same week they graduated from The Australian Ballet School – and performed in the 2019/2020 tour of *Storytime Ballet: The Nutcracker*. Karina, Adam and Jett started at the beginning of 2020 and debuted shortly after in the Brisbane season of *The Happy Prince*.

They may only have had a couple of months to settle into their new positions before the company started 'dancing from home', but the nine new kids on the block are brimming with personality, passion and promise. Here, we get to know the new intake a little more before we have the pleasure of seeing them perform live again in the not-too-distant future.

Karina Arimura (Age 19)
Place of birth: Kagoshima, Japan

My first memory of dance: I started dancing in my mother's ballet studio at the age of three.

My role model: I have so many but Dorothée Gilbert and Julie Kent are my forever idols.

My dream role or repertoire: Giselle, Juliet, Titania in Frederick Ashton's *The Dream*, Kitri in *Don Quixote* ... and so many more!

My big ambition: Two of the many dreams that I want to come true is to tour to my home country, Japan, and to perform a principal role one day.

When I'm not dancing you'll find me ... Watching musicals! My top favourites are *Phantom of the Opera* and *Les Misérables*. I also love watching Disney and Ghibli movies.

Adam Elmes (Age 20)
Place of birth: Brisbane, Australia

My first memory of dance: My mum used to put on some musical theatre songs and we would sing and dance in the living room when I was quite little; 'I Know Him So Well' from *Chess* always reminds me of my mum.

My role model: I would say my role model is someone immediate in my family like my brother, just in his views and character.

My dream role or repertoire: I would love someday to perform James in *La Sylphide* or dance in an Alexander Ekman piece.

Thomas Gannon (Age 19)
Place of birth: Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia

My first memory of dance: I was with my best friend, his sister and my sister. My friend and his sister told us that we were the better dancers and able to concentrate better, even though we were only five years old.

My role model: My dance role models are Lucinda Dunn and David Hallberg, but my role model in life is Mariah Carey.

My dream role or repertoire: The repertoire I would most love to perform would be George Balanchine's *Jewels*, and my dream role is James in *La Sylphide*.

My big ambition: To become a principal artist one day and to bring joy to my audiences and fans.

When I'm not dancing you'll find me ... at a café drinking coffee, or inside watching female singers, or playing board games with friends.

Benjamin Garrett (Age 19)
Place of birth: Hornsby, New South Wales, Australia. But my earliest memories are of growing up in the Hunter Valley

My first memory of dance: Dancing alone in my garage to Michael Jackson's 'Thriller',

wearing a fedora and using a cardboard box as a coffin.

My role model: One of my role models is the choreographer Alexander Ekman. I find him inspiring because he always approaches dance and his choreography with a sense of humour, play and discovery. That is a very important thing for me personally because I find that when I approach my dancing too seriously and critically, I forget why I love doing it so much in the first place.

My dream role or repertoire: I would love to dance in Wayne McGregor's *Infra*, and any work by Crystal Pite.

My big ambition: To dance and experience as many different styles and choreographers as I can squeeze into my lifetime.

When I'm not dancing you'll find me ... having a boogie anyway.

Alain Juelg (Age 19)
Place of birth: Cairns, Queensland, Australia

My first memory of dance: Watching my mum put on a concert for her ballet school. My brother wanted me to play outside while it was going on but I wanted to be backstage and watching.

My role model: People such as Daniel Gaudiello, Carlos Acosta and Rudolf

Nureyev are all huge inspirations to me in terms of technique and their artistic expression.

My dream role or repertoire: Solor from *La Bayadère*, Basilio from *Don Quixote* and Albrecht from *Giselle* are probably my three favourite roles and ones I would love the chance to perform someday.

My big ambition: To be the best dancer that I can possibly be. I want to be able to perform my movements as a strong virtuosic male dancer while still maintaining the tenderness in my acting that many romantic ballets require.

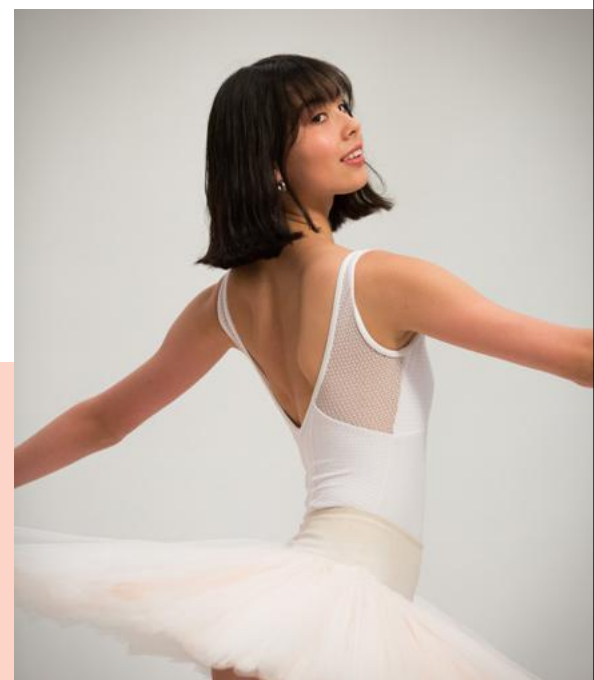
When I'm not dancing you'll find me ... playing guitar. It is something I have been doing for a number of years, however I've only recently become very passionate about it.

Larissa Kiyoto-Ward (Age 18)
Place of birth: Auckland, New Zealand

My first memory of dance: Dancing to a DVD of Barbie in *The Nutcracker* before I started doing ballet classes.

My role model: I have so many I can't choose ... but my mum is definitely one of them!

My dream role or repertoire: My dream role would be Kitri from *Don Quixote*, but I would also love to



dance in Roland Petit's *Carmen*.

My big ambition: To be the best possible dancer I can be and find my own unique style.

When I'm not dancing you'll find me ... At home taking a nap or trying to start a new book.

Lilly Maskery (Age 19)
Place of birth: Auckland,
 New Zealand

My first memory of dance:
 Watching a family friend do Irish dancing competitions and wanting to be just like her.

My role model: Marianela Núñez or Michael Jordan.

My dream role or repertoire:
 Juliet or Giselle.

My big ambition: To transport an audience emotionally to a place they've never been before and to find something different in myself every time I dance.

When I'm not dancing you'll find me... hanging out with friends or swimming.

Jett Ramsay (Age 19)
Place of birth: Sydney,
 New South Wales, Australia

My first memory of dance: Before I started classical training, I

used to get down and frolic to the music program *Rage* every morning from 5am before school.

My role model: My father, who I can trust and learn from with his witty sense of humour and influential desire for the art form.

My dream role or repertoire:
 I adore *Romeo and Juliet* and would relish the opportunity to perform the intensely passionate and overpowering force of love in this ballet someday.

My big ambition: To dance for my family and with my family as much as I can.

When I'm not dancing you'll find me ... playing basketball, catching up with friends over a coffee and keeping in touch with my family.

Belle Urwin (Age 19)
Place of birth: Sydney,
 New South Wales, Australia

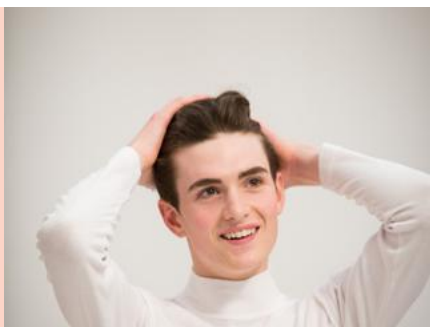
My first memory of dance: I was four years old and it was my very first ballet concert. I was dressed in a full clown costume as I was part of the circus. The moment I stepped on stage I forgot all the choreography! Luckily, I had my twin sister right next to me who did a great job of leading the way. I like to believe I was embracing my character's role as a clown a little better!

My role model: I have two, my parents. My father instilled four core values into all us children from a young age: respect, initiative, responsibility and organisation. Although I may not have understood these words when I was younger, they have helped prepare me for the demanding career path I have chosen to pursue. In addition, my mother is a nurse who demonstrates the importance of kindness and compassion towards others. I am grateful for the opportunities my parents have given me and the lifelong lessons I have learnt.

My dream role or repertoire: I have always loved the role of Nikiya in Marius Petipa's *La Bayadère* as well as Kitri from *Don Quixote*. To be able to perform these challenging yet rewarding roles would be a dream come true.

My big ambition: In life I want to go as far as possible within The Australian Ballet and to travel around the world with the company. In addition, I will continue to develop and challenge myself to reach my full potential.

When I'm not dancing you'll find me ... playing competitive eucure or five hundred with my family, watching movies, listening to music or cooking up a storm in the kitchen!



Larissa Kiyoto-Ward, Benjamin Garrett and Karina Arimura. Photography Kate Longely



The Philanthropy Team

KENNETH WATKINS
Philanthropy Director
 03 9669 2780
kennethw@australianballet.com.au

SHARYN GILHAM
*Executive Assistant to Philanthropy Director,
 Patrons Manager Foundation
 & Special Projects*
 03 9669 2785
sharyng@australianballet.com.au

SONIA GREBENSHIKOFF
Philanthropy Manager
 - NSW, ACT & QLD
 02 9253 5317
soniag@australianballet.com.au

BEN LEE
Philanthropy Manager
 - VIC, TAS & WA
 03 9669 2735
benl@australianballet.com.au

ADAM SANTILLI
*Philanthropy Business Manager
 & Patrons Manager - SA*
 03 9669 2784
adams@australianballet.com.au

LIZ RUGGIERI
Planned Giving Manager
 - VIC, TAS, WA & SA
 03 9669 2782
lizr@australianballet.com.au

ANDREW WRIGHT
*Planned Giving
 & Patrons Representative*
 - NSW, ACT & QLD
 02 9253 5316
andreww@australianballet.com.au

PHILIPPA CLEMENT-LEVIN
Philanthropy Coordinator
 - NSW, ACT & QLD
 02 9253 5309
philippac@australianballet.com.au

DAVID WYNNE
Ballet Ambassador Program
 02 9253 5311
davidw@australianballet.com.au

DIANA CHATFIELD
Special Events Coordinator
 03 9669 2549
dianac@australianballet.com.au

KELLY WINTER-IRVING
Philanthropy Services Coordinator
 03 9669 2775
kellyw@australianballet.com.au

PHILANTHROPY SERVICES

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

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