

Wednesday 18 February 2009

The nominations are in! 2009 Telstra Ballet Dancer Award contenders announced

Six talented dancers embark on an extraordinary journey



Juliet Burnett

Robyn Hendricks

Andrew Killian

Leanne Stojmenov

Laura Tong

Stephanie Williams

The search is officially on for Australia's favourite ballet dancer! Nominees for the **2009 Telstra Ballet Dancer Award** were revealed in Melbourne today.

Now in its **seventh year**, this award is the highest accolade of its kind available to an Australian ballet dancer.

The 2009 Telstra Ballet Dancer Award nominees are **Juliet Burnett** (from Sydney, NSW), **Robyn Hendricks** (South Africa), **Andrew Killian** (Melbourne, VIC), **Leanne Stojmenov** (Perth, WA), **Laura Tong** (New Zealand) and **Stephanie Williams** (Newcastle, NSW).

With 36 years of professional experience between them, the average age of the nominees is 25 years – a fitting compliment to the 25 year partnership reached by Telstra and The Australian Ballet this year. This silver anniversary represents one of the longest-running arts partnerships in Australia.

Conceived in 2003 to support the aspirations of The Australian Ballet's dancers, the Telstra Ballet Dancer Award encourages excellence across all aspects of ballet. The winner is awarded a \$20,000 cash prize, provided by Telstra.

Telstra's Consumer Group Managing Director, David Moffatt, said Telstra is very proud of its long association with one of the country's flagship arts companies and in particular with these talented young people.

"All six nominees should be congratulated for their dedication, professionalism and extraordinary achievements which have led to them being nominated," Mr Moffatt said.

These six exceptionally talented dancers were nominated by The Australian Ballet's artistic staff and Principal Artists.

Each will be judged on the artistic quality of their work over the course of a full performance year. They will also be judged on perceived potential, personal development and their support of other dancers.

Last year, Western Australia's Kevin Jackson took out the coveted award, presented by Sarah Murdoch, a director of The Australian Ballet.

The ever-popular People's Choice Award, worth \$5,000 cash, will again go to the dancer who receives the most public votes in 2009.

A record-breaking 72,000 votes were cast last year, with Victorian Amy Harris receiving the highest number.

To vote for your favourite dancer, simply SMS their first name to 0439 BALLETT (0439 225 538) or visit australianballet.com.au.

Previous winners of the Telstra Ballet Dancer Award:

2003 Matthew Lawrence	2006 Gina Brescianini
2004 Amber Scott	2007 Daniel Gaudiello
2005 Lana Jones	2008 Kevin Jackson

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For media enquiries:

Telstra: Martin Barr 0418 101 127

The Australian Ballet: Donna Cusack 0409 359 174



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Juliet Burnett – Soloist

Sydney-born Juliet Burnett trained with Valerie Jenkins, and later with Christine Keith. She also received special coaching from her great mentor, the late Valrene Tweedie. Accepted into The Australian Ballet School in 2000, she joined The Australian Ballet in 2003. In 2004 Juliet was a guest artist on The Dancers Company tour, performing as Clara in Leigh Rowles' production of *The Nutcracker*, a role created on her in 2002. In 2008, while still a Coryphée, she was chosen by choreographer Matjash Mrozewski to create the title role in his ballet *Semele*. Juliet has recently been promoted to Soloist for the 2009 season.

You may not know...

Juliet's mum is Indonesian, coming from a large, creative family, and her grandmother was the Sultan's principal dancer in his court in Java.

Robyn Hendricks - Coryphée

South African-born Robyn Hendricks began ballet classes aged eight after her grandfather observed her tendency to dance on her toes. Robyn travelled to Melbourne in 2001 to participate in the annual Cecchetti International Competition and where she auditioned for The Australian Ballet School. During her time at the school, Robyn was one of four students selected to participate in a student exchange with the National Ballet School in Toronto. She joined The Australian Ballet company in 2005 and has since performed lead roles in many ballets including Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake*, the *Jiri* season and the lead Wilis in *Giselle*. In 2008 Robyn was promoted to Coryphée and was a guest artist on The Dancers Company tour.

You may not know...

Robyn enjoys reading and cooking in her spare time and is fluent in Afrikaans.

Andrew Killian – Senior Artist

Melbourne-born Andrew Killian, a student of The Australian Ballet School, joined The Australian Ballet in 2000. He was promoted to Senior Artist for the 2009 season. Andrew has performed in a variety of leading roles for the company including Lescaut in Kenneth McMillan's *Manon*, Espada in Rudolph Nureyev's *Don Quixote*, the Nutcracker Prince in Peter Wright's *The Nutcracker*, and the Cavalier in George Balanchine's *Ballet Imperial*. He has also been involved in creating many new works including Stephen Baynes' *Constant Variants* and all of the company's *Bodytorque* seasons. Andrew's close work with choreographers offers a unique versatility that places him in high demand.

You may not know...

Andrew is still struggling to learn how to cook and cried like a baby at his best friend's wedding.

Leanne Stojmenov – Senior Artist

Leanne Stojmenov was born and raised in Perth where she began her ballet training with Helen McKay. Her full-time training began at the Graduate College under the school's director, Terri Charlesworth, and in 1999 she joined the West Australian Ballet. In 2001 Leanne moved to Melbourne and joined The Australian Ballet. Receiving the NSW Friends of The Australian Ballet scholarship in 2004 enabled her to study throughout Europe. Leanne has a high regard for artists that can adapt to all kinds of roles and repertoire. She was recently promoted to Senior Artist for the 2009 season.

You may not know...

While for now her passion is in the arts, in the future Leanne would love to open a small business.

Laura Tong - Soloist

Laura Tong was born and grew up in New Zealand as well as living in Singapore and London. She started dancing at four, attending ballet and piano lessons with her older sister. Laura studied with Maureen Ax, Phillipa Campbell and Joye Lowe in NZ, then at the English National Ballet School from 1998 to 2000. Upon graduation Laura entered the English National Ballet before joining The Australian Ballet in 2004. Laura performed key roles with the English National Ballet including White Ladies in *Etudes* and Prayer in *Coppélia*. Career highlights for The Australian Ballet include the mistress in *Manon*, *The Concert*, Stephen Baynes' *Constant Variants*, the lead Wilis in *Giselle*, and *Rites* with Bangarra Dance Theatre.

You may not know...

Laura has three sisters; a scientist, a vet and an economist.

Stephanie Williams - Coryphée

Stephanie Williams was born in Newcastle and began training at Marie Walton-Mahon when she was eight years old, before relocating to Melbourne in 2003 to enter The Australian Ballet School. She realised a long-held dream when she danced the dual role of Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake* for her graduation. Stephanie joined The Australian Ballet in 2007 and has already danced several principal roles with the company, including those in *Afternoon of a Faun*, *Symphonie Fantastique* and the *Black Swan Pas de Deux*. A classical traditionalist at heart, Stephanie nevertheless loves the challenges of contemporary ballet.

You may not know...

Stephanie has a keen interest in modern history and loves sport, particularly cricket, rugby league and AFL.

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