

4 December 2009

## 2009 Telstra Ballet Dancer Award ... It's a Clean Sweep!

**Stephanie Williams is the winner of the 2009 Telstra Ballet Dancer Award.** She also took out the coveted People's Choice prize making a clean sweep of this year's awards, which were announced in Sydney last night.

Williams, a Coryphée with The Australian Ballet, was one of six nominees vying for the prestigious title.

The announcement was made by Telstra's Group Managing Director, Telstra Business, Deena Shiff, in front of a capacity crowd at the Sydney Opera House, following the company's opening night performance of *The Sleeping Beauty* last night.

A special announcement party was held afterwards in the Opera House's Northern Foyer.

In presenting the Award Ms Shiff said: "Stephanie has been recognised not only for her hard work and dedication off the stage, but also the skill and precision she displayed so effortlessly on stage throughout the year.

"At such an early phase in her dance career, Telstra is pleased to provide financial assistance to help Stephanie realise her dreams and continue her professional development," Ms Shiff said.

Now in its seventh year, the award is a highlight of The Australian Ballet's relationship with its Principal Sponsor, Telstra.

At 22 years old, Stephanie has not even matched the age of the 25-year partnership achieved by Telstra and The Australian Ballet this year. This silver anniversary represents one of the longest-running arts partnerships in Australia.

Reflecting on the relationship Ms Deena Shiff said:

"Telstra is proud of the 25 year milestone achieved in partnership with The Australian Ballet, and the many dancers we have helped support through our ongoing commitment.

"We are pleased to have the opportunity to encourage the aspirations of The Australian Ballet's elite young

dancers, and help make the ballet more accessible to more people across Australia."

The Telstra Ballet Dancer Award is the highest accolade of its kind available to an Australian dancer.

Stephanie won the \$20,000 cash prize after being judged as outstanding on numerous criteria over the course of the year. This included the artistic quality of her work, the strength of a written submission, her personal development and future potential.

She also collected an additional \$5,000 cash as the Telstra People's Choice winner, as voted by the general public who registered votes online and by SMS, and was presented with spectacular statuettes created by Dinosaur Designs exclusively for the Telstra Ballet Dancer Award.

The other nominees were **Juliet Burnett, Robyn Hendricks, Andrew Killian, Leanne Stojmenov and Laura Tong.** These six exceptionally talented dancers were nominated by The Australian Ballet's artistic staff and Principal Artists.

This year's judging panel was comprised of David McAllister (Artistic Director, The Australian Ballet), Valerie Wilder (Executive Director, The Australian Ballet), Danilo Radojevic (Associate Artistic Director, The Australian Ballet), Richard Howarth (Telstra, General Manager Sponsorships & Reputation), Chris Boyd (Dance Critic, The Herald Sun) and Chris Bath (News Presenter, Channel 7).

Amber Scott, currently a Senior Artist with The Australian Ballet, is the only other person to win both Awards, doing so in 2004.

Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet David McAllister said: "Now Stephanie Williams and Amber Scott have more in common than their beautiful dancing! Winning both components in this year's Telstra Ballet Dancer Award is a huge endorsement from both the company and our audience. Stephanie is a dancer who is having a great career that I am sure will continue on the rapid rise she has enjoyed since joining the company in 2007."

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For media enquiries:

The Australian Ballet: Donna Cusack, 0409 359 174  
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Celebrating  
25 years of  
partnership



The  
Australian  
Ballet



**Stephanie Williams**  
2009 Telstra Ballet Dancer Award winner and  
People's Choice winner



Stephanie Williams in *The Sleeping Beauty* photo Liz Ham

Stephanie Williams was born in Newcastle and began training at Marie Walton-Mahon Dance Academy when she was eight years old, before relocating to Melbourne in 2003 to enter Level 5 of 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 performance with the School.

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.

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

#### REPERTOIRE HIGHLIGHTS

*Dyad 1929* 2009  
*Divergence* 2009  
*Symphonie Fantastique* 2008  
*The Sleeping Beauty* grand pas de deux 2008  
*Afternoon of a Faun* 2008  
*Les Présages* 2007  
*After the Rain* 2007  
*Black Swan Pas de Deux* 2007  
Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake* Tokyo 2007  
Stanton Welch's *The Sleeping Beauty* Tokyo 2007

#### GUEST APPEARANCES

The Dancers Company tour 2008

#### AWARDS

Telstra Ballet Dancer Award and Telstra People's Choice Award 2009  
Gold Medal at the 10th Asia Pacific International Ballet Competition 2005  
Graeme Murphy Award for Excellence in Contemporary Dance 2005  
Dux of The Australian Ballet School 2006

#### TELSTRA BALLET DANCER AWARD previous winners:

2008 Kevin Jackson  
2007 Daniel Gaudiello  
2006 Gina Brescianini  
2005 Lana Jones  
2004 Amber Scott (and People's Choice winner)  
2003 Matthew Lawrence

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