

STEPS Youth Dance Company EDUCATION RESOURCES

Company history...

STEPS began late in 1988 as an Education Department initiative through the "Performing Arts Services Centre" based at Subiaco Theatre Centre. The first project was choreographed by Ruth Osborne (now Artistic Director of Quantum Leap Youth Dance Company, QL2), Michael Johnson and Barbara Doherty and was performed by just 12 dancers at The Dolphin Theatre at The University of Western Australia.

From these humble beginnings, STEPS has produced a major season of work each year and a wide variety of other performances and collaborations. Different and interesting projects include:

- Collaborations with the WA Youth Theatre Company and WA Youth Jazz Orchestra to create "Youth Arts Incorporated" which produced 2 performances for the Perth Festival in 1995 and 1997.
- Collaborations with Buzz Dance Theatre (formerly Two Dance Plus) with young dancers performing alongside professional dancers from the company.
- Choreographic projects with young dancers being mentored by professional artists to create their own works.
- The "Boys Can Dance" projects which encourage boys to participate in dance. The first performance was in 1997 at the Nexus Theatre.
- Projects for Primary School age children called "POWDERMONKEY" which have been performed in many country and metropolitan areas.
- Touring to the Australian Youth Dance festivals in Townsville, Queensland and Armidale, NSW and Mandurah.
- Collaborations with Extensions Dance Company-Queensland, Awesome Festival, WAAPA and the WA Ballet.

STEPS Major seasons include

Year	Season	Choreographers
1989	STEPS	Ruth Osborne Michael Johnson Barbara Doherty
1990	STEPS	Shane Markham Ruth Osborne Derek Holtzinger
1991	STEPS	Ruth Osborne James Berlyn Phillippa Clarke
1992	STEPS	Ruth Osborne Edmund Stripe Setefano Tele Claudia Alessi
1993	STEPS	Ruth Osborne Elizabeth Hill Lynne Williams Michael Johnson

1994	STEPS	Ruth Osborne Felicity Bott Darryl Brandwood Setefano Tele
1995	Next Step	Belinda Cooper Phillippa Clarke
1996	If the Jacket Fits	Ruth Osborne Sue Peacock Claudia Alessi Olivia Millard
1997	Bring Down the House	Rachael Whitworth Phillippa Clarke
1998	Step Across	Shannon Bott David Prudham Sue Peacock
1999	ChromoZones	Claudia Alessi Rob Griffin Setefano Tele
2000	Around the World in 80 Days	Claudia Alessi Jane Neville Danielle Rock Stephanie Slack
2001	Edge Test	Felicity Bott Stefano Tele
2002	Girls Gear Boys Breaks	Felicity Bott Bernie Bernard Setefano Tele Sandi Woo
2003	eat it up! Dances of Atlantis, Noir Revolver and Monks of Funk	Felicity Bott Rob Griffin Bernie Bernard
2004	Fifteen performance of past productions with various choreographers	
2005	Mania	Danielle Micich Danielle Rock
2006	Kissxx	Danielle Micich Alice Lee Holland Danielle Rock
2007	dash	Danielle Micich Alice Lee Holland Shona Erskine

		Richard Cilli
2008	nospace	Sam Fox Rachel Ogle Bianca Martin
2009	moonwebs & scorched thongs	Alice Lee Holland Shannon Anderson Sofie Burgoyne Shannon Riggs Paul Zivkovich
2010	PHOENIX	Alice Lee Holland Adam Wheeler Tyrone Robinson

Who Runs the Company...

STEPS Youth Dance Company is a not-for-profit incorporated association run by a Board of Management with three part-time staff members. The Board of Management is a group of dedicated professionals who are re-elected each year at the Annual General meeting. Current Board membership covers skills including Marketing, Sponsorship, Project management, Educators, Dance Practitioners, Production and Venue management and Finance.

STEPS currently employ three part-time staff. The General Manager (3 days/week) oversees the daily operations of the company business, plans the overall program for future projects and is responsible for core funding grants, the Artistic Director (3 days/week) is responsible for planning, creating and choreographing the dance works and a Marketing and Funds Development Coordinator (2 ½ days/week) who is responsible for finding funding opportunities and sponsors to help raise money for the company, as well as marketing all aspects of the companies work. Creative and Production personnel (additional choreographers, production and stage managers, composers and musicians, set and costume designers, publicists and photographers) are contracted for projects as required.

The Board of Management and family members of dancers are also very active in providing voluntary, hands on support during busy periods.

STEPS Youth Dance Company has had two General Managers – Michelle Saunders (1988-2007) and Cassandra Lake (2007-present). The Artistic Directors who have been with company have added their own style and personality to the dance works they have created, and the dancers they have worked with. The Artistic Directors have been:

Ruth Osborne	1988-1999
Claudia Alessi	1999-2000
Felicity Bott	2001-2003
Danielle Micich	2004-2007
Sam Fox	2008
Alice Lee Holland	2009-present

The dancers and the performances...

For most STEPS performances, young dancers from secondary schools, tertiary institutions and the work place audition for a place in the company. The dancers are

aged 15-25. Information about auditions is sent to schools and is available on the STEPS website. The auditions run like a workshop/class and members are selected to participate in the project.

STEPS also runs classes during the year for young people who wish to improve their technique and learn more about choreography and the process of creating dance. "POWDERMONKEY" is a special project for Primary school students, which involves workshops at schools in a specific community and a residential development phase culminating in public performances. This project specifically targets 9 – 13 year olds.

STEPS create original performance works that are accessible, relevant and appealing to young people within the Australian context. This is achieved through an unwavering commitment to collaboration, a challenging process that has successfully enabled the creation of relevant new work over many seasons. STEPS is committed to process as much as performance. The programmes developed and run by STEPS help young dancers to focus on the ways they work together as much as how they appear in public. Along with leading dance artists, STEPS Company dancers collaborate with associated professional artists across sound, theatre, design and media to explore, discover and invent dance for a myriad of contexts.

STEPS aims to make the time a student spends with the Company enjoyable, educational and worthwhile, developing students' social skills as well as their dance and choreographic skills. Since 1988, close to 1000 young dancers and 100 young musicians and artists have had the opportunity to participate in a STEPS project. The company has reached that number again through workshops in schools.

STEPS is nationally renowned for innovation and dynamism in the field of youth arts. The company is also one of the most consistent producers of large-scale contemporary dance work in WA – work that receives critical acclaim from peers and general public alike. Major innovations include:

- the high impact initiation and development of the Boys Can Dance project
- the development of an original and best practice dance theatre program for children in the form of the POWDERMONKEY project
- fully realised contemporary works recognised for choreographic excellence and cultural relevance, made with and by young and emerging artists.

Funding...

STEPS is a not-for-profit organisation primarily funded by the WA Government through the Department of Culture and the Arts. We are sponsored by the Western Australian Health Promotion Foundation (Healthway) to promote the Heart Foundation's BE ACTIVE message and major sponsor BHP Billiton Nickel West.

In 2009, STEPS partnered with Hawaiian as Education Partner as part of a new initiative from the Australia Businesses Arts Foundation called The Western Australian Premier's Arts Partnership Fund: a three-way partnership between the Australia Business Arts Foundation, Mirvac WA and the Government of Western Australia. Local small business sponsors include Crumpler and Parmelia Print, and we are extremely grateful for in-kind sponsorship from 303.

Additional funds for projects are sought from the Australia Council, local governments and foundations, as required.

For STEPS Youth Dance Company funding is mostly achieved through government grants, sponsorship, ticket sales and participant fees. This money is spent on wages

for the Artistic Director, General Manager, choreographers, technical staff, admin costs such as rent, phone, stationary, marketing, insurance, hire of venues, costumes, lighting, music and much more.

A Government grant is money given to companies or individuals to develop or create artistic work. Usually companies are funded for core operations (running the business) and performances whilst individuals are funded more for performance. Government grants may come from the state government (The Department of Culture and the Arts) or federal government (Australia Council for the Arts).

STEPS receives state funding through DCA for a three year period, and re-applies each three years by completing an application form that includes writing a Business plan with artistic programmes and budgets, and a review of all aspects of the company operations. The company reapplies for funding each 3 years. A panel reviews the applications.

STEPS has received funding for special projects from the Australia Council (Ozco), however it is very difficult especially for WA companies as Ozco is based in the eastern states.

STEPS is registered with the Register of Cultural Organisations, which enables the company to receive non-taxable donations, and they do not have to pay GST on ticket sales.

Sponsorship is money given to companies to complete artistic performances with the condition that the sponsor is advertised through the dance company. You follow the same process for sponsors but you also have to include a plan to promote the sponsor and you really need to impress them!!! Overall it is really difficult to get funding and only a few companies are successful.

The major sponsor for STEPS is BHP Billiton Nickel West and Healthway, with STEPS currently promoting the "Be Active" message. STEPS must actively promote sponsorships on t shirts, posters, and correspondence, phone messages and speeches and media opportunities. STEPS is always looking for more corporate sponsors to assist in expanding the program, and to help provide new opportunities to its members.

STEPS is one of the most successful youth dance companies in Australia mainly because the organisation has a dedicated team of professionals. Every one involved with the company is committed to the provision of opportunity for young dancers, and is dedicated to our mission.

The vision for STEPS Youth Dance Company is to activate the artist in our dancers and to engage the creative energy of audiences. We provide the means for young people to create their own original contemporary dance culture by delivering cutting edge, explorative work.