



WA CLASSICAL BALLET
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

CLASSICAL CONNECTIONS

Ideas, insights & inspiration for classical ballet teachers

ISSUE 04 | SEPTEMBER 2026

Mission Statement



We are a professional association for classical ballet teachers, dedicated to enhancing the quality of classical ballet teaching in Western Australia through collectively sharing knowledge and best practices in teaching.

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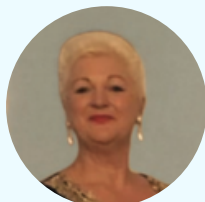
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Message from the Chair

Helene Gowers, Chair — WACBTA

Once again, it gives me great pleasure to offer you our newsletter.

We have some wonderful articles from our guest presenters from earlier this year; some fabulous insights into the benefits of attending our events and generous comments from our supporters.

Our newsletters would not be possible without the tireless work of our volunteers, Jasmin McGregor and Robyn Cooper. Thank you both so much for your valuable contribution to making our organisation, and our newsletters particularly, such a success.

I take this opportunity to thank BLOCH Dancewear for their generous donations to our fundraising towards teacher training.

We have an eclectic and hardworking committee dedicated to raising the standard of classical ballet teaching here in WA and each member's contribution is needed and welcome. It's a great team to work with!

I look forward to seeing you at our next event, but, in the meantime, read on!

Helene Gowers
Chair, WACBTA

Learn more about our wonderful contributors: wacbta.org.au/newsletter

Pas de Oops!!

by WACBTA



We are pleased to introduce a new regular column for "Classical Connections" – and we would love your contributions for future editions!

As performers, and teachers of performers, we all know that sometimes, despite all the rehearsals, and all the coaching, and all the fine-tuning...things go wrong! And on stage, that can make for some hilarious (and not so hilarious) moments!

So please think about some of those times when things didn't go QUITE as planned and share your stories with us all through our new column "Pas De Oops!"

To kick off the memories, and to prove that Oopsies happen even in the best of companies, here are some stories from Denise Nunn, reminiscing about her time in the Royal Ballet!

Over to you, Denise!



"The times one remembers in the Royal Ballet Company....." by Denise Nunn

Quite often, the performances I remember most in my professional career are the times things went wrong!

Like the time, during "Sleeping Beauty", where the nymphs were SUPPOSED to enter both from backstage OP and prompt simultaneously...you guessed it, we didn't! One side entered 2 whole bars ahead of the other side – and thinking back, it must have been SO noticeable! We all eventually realised our mistake and made some sort of compromise to come together, all trying to pretend it never happened!

I can't remember who was at fault and how we ended up completely out of step, but in the interval, we proved we could actually move cohesively when there was a concerted rush to hide in the toilets when the Ballet Mistress came to enquire what went so terribly wrong!

A similar incident occurred during "Swan Lake" Act 2. At one performance, the violinist came in two bars too early. So one side of Swans were following the baseline and the other the violinist! In hindsight, I just hope the audience thought it was a new and interesting variation on the classic!

Another time during "Cinderella", the corps de ballet was performing 'Stars'. It was a spikey sort of dance with lots of pointed hands and arms. A dancer experienced what looked like a brown bird's nest landing on her tutu. She instinctively and promptly threw it off, as we were all saying 'what is that?' and I remember this thing being thrown from dancer to dancer in the group clump, as we all tried to avoid this strange beast that had invaded our corps.....



...Eventually, someone realised it was a part of one of the dancers' hair pieces which was not properly secured! The girl with missing hair was in big trouble!

Costumes could also provide their own “interesting moments”! I will never forget the performance of “La Fille Mal Gardée” when I danced the role of a chicken - both my chicken feet flew off one after the other during the shuffles, giving a whole new meaning to the phrase “footloose and fancy free”!

The Ballet Mistress was distinctly ‘not amused’ again - but in my defence, the chicken claws were too big for me – and that is the responsibility of the wardrobe department. (Of course, I didn’t say that, as we just didn’t in those days.)

During “A Month in the Country” ballet – Sir Anthony Dowell’s character is banished from the household with a large bag supposedly carrying all his belongings. This is his final exit near the end of the ballet. It’s a very sad dramatic moment. However, one night, his fellow dancers conspired to fill his normally empty case with the weights that hold down the stage wings. Therefore, when Anthony lifted the bag that night it was some 10+ kgs heavier! He didn’t even flinch. I often wondered if he got his own back on the culprits.

Remembering these things that went wrong, my only regret is that I would have loved to be in the audience to see the damage!"

A decorative poster with a light pink background and a dark pink border. At the top, there are three small dark pink floral motifs. The main title 'HAVE YOU HAD A PAS DE OOPS?' is written in a mix of blue and dark pink fonts, with several four-pointed starburst icons. Below the title is a decorative flourish with a heart in the center. The text 'We want to hear about it!' is written in a blue cursive font. To the right of the text is a pair of pink ballet slippers with long ribbons tied together at the top. Below the text is a list of five mishaps, each preceded by a dark pink diamond icon. At the bottom, there is a row of dots, followed by the text 'Share your funniest ballet mishaps with us for a future edition of Classical Connections.' To the left of this text is a blue envelope with a dark pink heart on it, and to the right is a pink tiara with blue and white jewels. At the very bottom, there is another row of dots and a dark pink floral motif.



Training The Body That Actually Dances

by Shane Wuerthner,
Former Principal Artist · Founder of Athletistry



The most important training a dancer does might be the training we never see.

Class builds technique. But the qualities that let technique survive a full rehearsal day, a competition season, or a growth spurt are built between classes: strength, load tolerance, and recovery. And that is exactly where most students are left to improvise. They copy a stretching routine from a video, add exercises with no plan behind them, or push through fatigue because nobody has shown them what sensible progression looks like.

I danced internationally for 12 years, as a Soloist with Vienna State Ballet and San Francisco Ballet and a Principal Artist at Queensland Ballet. Since retiring I have worked as a personal trainer specialising in dancers, and the same pattern keeps appearing. Dancers are among the most disciplined athletes on earth, yet their supplementary training is often the least structured part of their week. Not because they lack work ethic. Because nobody ever gave them a system.

That is the gap the Athletistry app is built to close.

What the app does

Athletistry is a training home base for dancers. At its core are guided strength and conditioning programs written specifically for ballet bodies, from gentle introductory plans through to serious progressive training, including The Practice, a 90 day anatomy first program that teaches dancers why they are doing each exercise, not just what to do. Around the programs sit timed circuit sessions, warm ups built for before class or performance, and a practice generator that assembles a balanced session on demand.

A few features your students and their families may find genuinely useful:

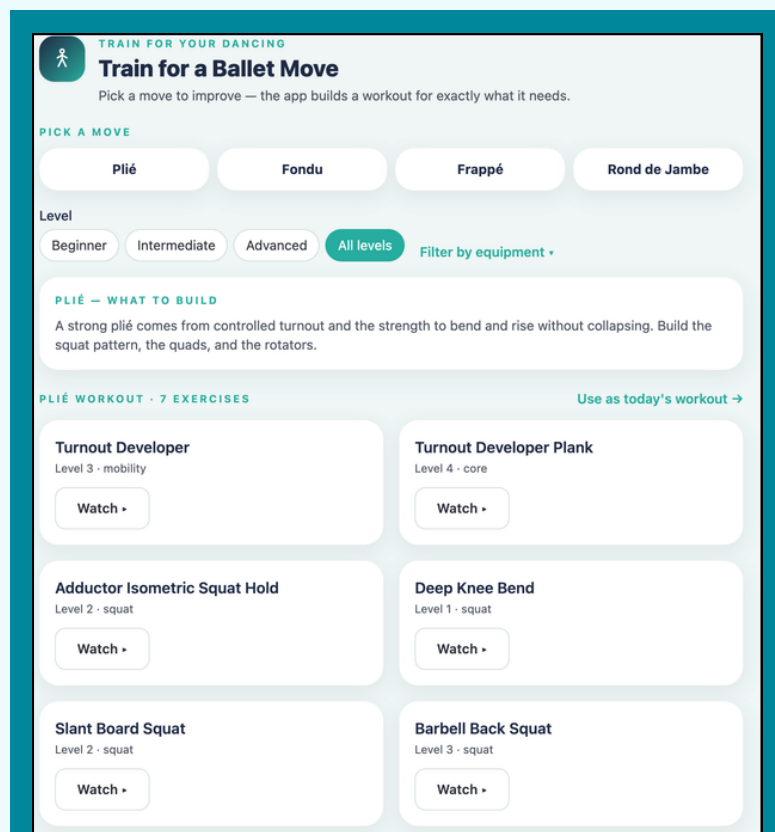


FIGURE 1 - Train for Ballet. Pick a move, and the app names what it needs and builds the workout, with a demonstration video for every exercise.

Train for Ballet. A dancer picks a movement they want to improve, such as plié, fondu or rond de jambe, and the app builds the workout that strengthens it. It connects gym work directly to the studio, which is often the missing link for students who see conditioning as separate from ballet.

Demo videos for every exercise. More than 58 looping demonstration videos, so there is no guessing at form. Every workout also lists exactly what equipment is needed, and most require nothing more than a band, a chair, or bodyweight.

Training load tracking. Students log their classes, rehearsals and workouts as time and effort, and the app tracks weekly load so they build up safely rather than in sudden spikes. As teachers, you see the downstream effect of this in the studio: students who arrive fresher and adapt rather than accumulate fatigue.

Training The Body That Actually Dances

by Shane Wuerthner,
Former Principal Artist · Founder of Athletistry



The Event Planner. A dancer sets an exam or performance date and the app plans their taper automatically, so they peak on the day rather than arriving tired from last minute cramming. For teachers preparing students for examinations, this alone may be worth the conversation.

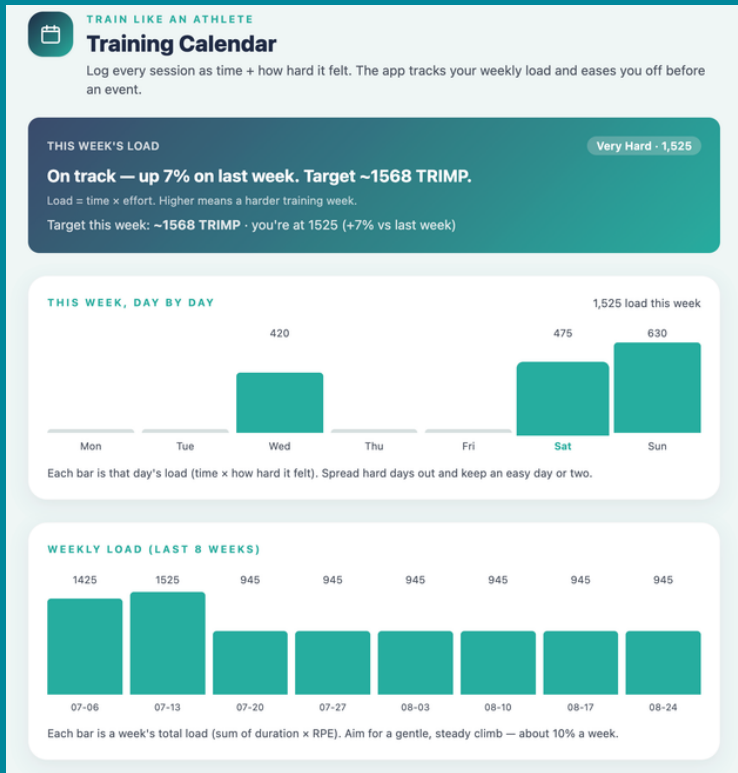


FIGURE 2 - The Training Calendar. Each day and week is logged as duration times effort, with a target for a gentle, steady climb and an automatic ease off before an event.

Anatomy education. Alongside the training tools sits a plain English anatomy course and the training science behind every program, for students and teachers who want to understand the why.

One note on scope, because I think it matters in a publication for teachers. I work as a personal trainer, not a physiotherapist. The app describes mechanics and training. It does not diagnose or treat, and it is not a substitute for clinical care when a dancer is injured. I hold that line deliberately, and I would encourage every teacher to expect the same clarity from anyone offering training advice to their students.

The community behind it

The app sits inside The Athletistry Project, my online community for adult dancers, teachers and serious students.

Membership includes The Dancer's Body anatomy course, dedicated turnout and ...

...pirouette courses, live workshops and a weekly live group call, with guest sessions from specialists such as performance dietitians.

The Premium and VIP tiers add the Athletistry app, weekly ballet classes and one to one coaching. The guiding idea is simple: ballet is a lifetime practice, and there are no shortcuts, only good training done consistently. It is the room where serious dancers and teachers build technique that holds, without forcing, faking, or fifteen second fixes.



“ Ballet is a lifetime practice,
and there are no shortcuts—
only good training done consistently. ”

SHANE WUERTHNER
Former Principal Artist · Founder of Athletistry

Training The Body That Acutally Dances

by Shane Wuerthner,
Former Principal Artist · Founder of Athletistry



Ballet Quick Start

5 lessons to guide your start to ballet

0%

Turnout Improvement Course

Seven days on the turnout most dancers are told to force and almost none are taught to...

0%

Weekly Calls

All Weekly Calls will be listed here

0%

Pirouette Course

7 lesson course that takes you from pirouette fundamentals to grand pirouettes

13%

The Dancer's Body: Anatomy and ...

The sports science behind ballet, in plain language. The Dancer's Body works through...

0%

Athletistry Transform your techni...

A two-hour recorded workshop with Shane Wuerthner that re-teaches how ballet...

0%

Where to find it

The Athletistry Project lives at skool.com/athletistryproject, with a free seven day trial and membership from **\$45 USD** per month. The app itself is included on the Premium and VIP tiers.

For Classical Connections readers, I would like to remove that last step. Join the community, send me a direct message inside Skool mentioning this article, and I will upgrade you to Premium at the standard membership rate, which means the full app is included at no extra cost. You can also see the app at athletistry.app, and find Athletistry on Instagram and YouTube.

It was a genuine pleasure meeting the WACBTA community at the gala, and I am grateful for the invitation to contribute. If any member has questions about training, load management or anatomy, I am always happy to hear them, and if there is a topic you would like covered in a future issue, please pass it along.

“Train smarter. Dance stronger. *Practice for many years.*”

SHANE WUERTHNER

Former Principal Artist · Founder of Athletistry

Your Choreography Is Ready... But Are Your Dancers Truly Recital Ready?

By Mariah-Jane Thies



The part of recital preparation most dance teachers aren't taught

It is recital season.

The choreography is polished and everything is finally clean! Yeah!!!

The costumes have been ordered and fitted. The music has been edited and uploaded. The rehearsal schedule is planned. The parents have received approximately 47 emails.

And yet... there is one question I wonder if we ask often enough:

Have we actually prepared our dancers for what is different about performing in a theatre?

Because the recital stage is not the dance studio.

A dancer can know the choreography beautifully in class and still struggle when the environment changes. The lighting is different. The floor feels different. The space may seem enormous. The music sounds different. There are other dancers around them, an audience watching, and nerves, excitement and anticipation.

And suddenly, the teacher isn't standing at the front of the room giving familiar cues. The dancer has to become their own performance support system, regardless of age. They are out there without you!

That is a very different skill from simply knowing the dance.

From Studio Brain to Performance Brain

For almost 40 years, I have watched dance teachers put enormous care into getting students ready for recital.

We teach the steps, clean the choreography, rehearse entrances and exits and talk about smiling, performing and being confident.

But there is another transition happening underneath all of this:

The transition from studio brain to performance brain.

What does a dancer need to do differently when they leave the familiar studio? What helps them orient themselves to an unfamiliar theatre? What should happen in the final class? And what are we accidentally doing that increases stress at exactly the moment we are trying to create confidence?

These are questions traditional dance teacher training doesn't necessarily answer - and yet they can have an enormous impact on performance.



Your Choreography Is Ready... But Are Your Dancers Truly Recital Ready?

By Mariah-Jane Thies



The Theatre Is a Completely Different Environment

Imagine taking a dancer who has practised a piece 50 times in the studio and suddenly placing them in a theatre.

Their visual information changes - bright stage lights replace familiar studio lighting.

Their auditory information changes - music may sound louder, softer or simply different.

Their spatial orientation changes - mirrors and familiar reference points disappear.

And their physical and emotional state can change. A dancer who felt completely secure in the studio may suddenly feel ungrounded, excited or anxious.

So rather than simply saying, "Don't be nervous!" or "You've got this... go have fun!", what if we gave dancers strategies for navigating that transition?

Pre-Orient the Dancer

One of the most valuable things a teacher can do is pre-orient the dancer.

Help them know:

- Where will I wait?
- Where will I enter and exit?
- What will the stage and lighting feel like?
- Where are the wings & where do I stand?
- What happens immediately before I go on?
- What might be unfamiliar?
- Who can I ask if I need help?

This isn't about removing every bit of nervousness.

Excitement is part of performance.

The goal is to help dancers have enough regulation and awareness that their excitement can become energy for their performance rather than overwhelm it.

The brain is wired to notice novelty. When the environment itself is unfamiliar, the brain can begin scanning for danger — making it harder to access something it already knows, such as a wonderfully polished dance.

And that right there explains a lot!

Your Last Class Shouldn't Just Be Another Rehearsal

Here's another question worth considering: What is your final class actually preparing for? If it is simply one more opportunity to polish choreography, we may be missing a precious opportunity.

The final class can become a rehearsal for the experience of performing — not just the steps. How will the dancer find their focus when the teacher isn't there?

How will they recover if something unexpected happens?

How will they shift from: "I'm trying to remember the choreography..." to: "I am performing this."

These are teachable skills — and they don't require another hour of choreography rehearsal. Sometimes, they require doing something completely different. The choreography is only part of the preparation.

"The choreography is only part of the preparation. We also need to prepare the dancer for the experience of performing it."

Ready for More?

This is the thinking behind Mariah-Jane's Recital Readiness Secrets — practical strategies to help dancers make the transition from rehearsing to performing with greater confidence and awareness.

Scan the QR code to learn more.

Want to know more?

SCAN THE QR CODE TO DISCOVER RECITAL READINESS SECRETS

Practical strategies to help dancers make the transition from rehearsing to performing with greater confidence and awareness.

3 PLACES THAT ALL REQUIRE Different Types of Recital Preparation

- IN STUDIO**
Learn, rehearse & build strong foundations
- DRESSING ROOM**
Prepare, settle & get ready to perform
- BACKSTAGE**
Focus, movement & awareness between dances

WACBTA MEMBERS RECEIVE 20% OFF
USE CODE: WACBTA20
OFFER VALID UNTIL 1 OCTOBER 2026

Scan me!

Building Trust Through Pas de Deux

by Christian Luck

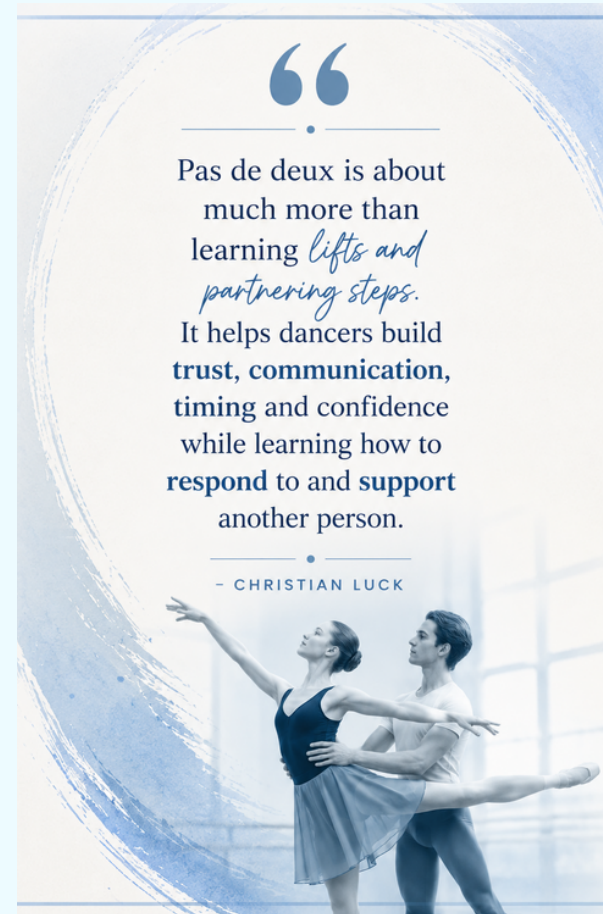


Pas de deux is about much more than learning lifts and partnering steps. It helps dancers build trust, communication, timing and confidence while learning how to respond to and support another person.

My recent pas de deux workshop gave teachers a wonderful opportunity to see how basic partnering skills can be introduced in a safe, practical and enjoyable way. It also explored how activities can be adapted to suit different ages—from fun mirroring, balance and teamwork exercises for younger dancers to more structured weight-sharing and supported movements for older students.

Introducing these skills in an age-appropriate way allows dancers to become comfortable working with a partner without feeling overwhelmed. It also gives teachers creative ways to make pas de deux training fun while developing the strong foundations dancers will need for more advanced partnering and classical repertoire.

I encourage all teachers to attend future workshops with students to dig deep into the weeds of such a magical part of our art form.



Opportunity, and the Freedom to Choose

by Australasian Classical Gala



We were so pleased to welcome international and national artistic panel members to Perth to lead workshops and give students personalised feedback. Bringing world-class expertise to Western Australia is exactly what the Australasian Classical Gala set out to do. What made the event so successful was the genuine support of our local teachers, who gave their time, opened their studios and were eager to learn alongside their students.

Our message is simple: young dancers in WA should be able to access world-class training and feedback without having to leave home to find it. By bringing these opportunities to Perth, we are lifting both the standard of training and the range of choices available here. Investing in our teachers matters just as much as investing in students, and our education forums were exceptionally well supported by students and teachers alike.

There is real value in starting young, while dancers are still at home and guided by their regular teachers. As they mature, some will choose to move interstate or overseas, but the goal is to leave at the right time, as a considered choice rather than an obligation. With WAAPA, dancers can even extend their training at a tertiary level and gain a recognised education without leaving the state. And increasingly, ACG is bringing dancers to WA to train alongside our students, making our state a destination rather than only a departure point.

This is what ACG has always been about. The event was a wonderful success and, above all, a genuinely positive experience for the students at its heart. To the West Australian Classical Ballet Teachers Association and every teacher who gave their time and trust, thank you. Together, we are giving Western Australian dancers the chance to dream big without having to leave home to do it.

Australasian Classical Gala · acgala.com.au · [@acgala](https://www.instagram.com/acgala)



Building Strong Foundations: Supporting Motor Skill Development in Young Ballet Dancers

by Solveigh Baramili, Paediatric Occupational Therapist and Teacher
(Bsc OT, Grad Dip Ed)



As a lifelong lover of ballet, I may be a little biased when it comes to sharing just how wonderful ballet can be for young children. However, as a children's occupational therapist and primary-trained teacher, I also know that the benefits of ballet in the early years are strongly supported by neuroscience and child development research.

The early years are a crucial time for developing physical, social, emotional, and cognitive skills, and ballet provides a truly unique environment where children can learn, explore, and flourish through movement.

It was a pleasure to present this year's workshop on Supporting Motor Skill Development in Young Ballet Dancers (3–6 years). It was wonderful to see so many teachers keen to deepen their understanding of child development and explore practical strategies that can make an immediate difference in the ballet studio.

For those who were unable to attend, here is a snapshot of some of the key ideas we explored.

Looking Beyond the Steps

Teaching our youngest dancers is about much more than introducing ballet positions and simple routines. Children aged three to six are still developing many of the foundational motor skills that ballet relies upon every lesson.

When we ask a young child to balance, coordinate their arms and legs, remember a sequence, move with the music and transition smoothly between positions, we are asking them to perform remarkably complex tasks.

These abilities are still emerging during the preschool years and develop at different rates for every child.

Understanding this helps us set realistic expectations while creating an environment where children can experience success.

Building the Foundations Before Technique

During the workshop, we explored several key areas that underpin movement in ballet, including motor planning, coordination, balance, proprioception (our body's awareness of where it is in space) and postural control.

Although these terms may sound clinical, they describe skills that ballet teachers observe every day.

The child who watches others before joining in, struggles to remember a movement sequence, appears "clumsy," or wobbles during balancing activities is often demonstrating skills that are still developing—not a lack of motivation or effort.

One message I hoped participants would take away was that motor control develops before refinement.

Before children can point their feet accurately, hold a balanced passé or perform simple choreography confidently, they first need stability, body awareness, coordination and the ability to plan and organise movement.

“ Motor control
develops *before* refinement. ”

— SOLVEIGH BARAMILI



Building Strong Foundations: Supporting Motor Skill Development in Young Ballet Dancers

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Practical Strategies for the Studio

One of the aims of the workshop was to provide practical ideas that teachers could use immediately.

Simple strategies such as maintaining predictable class routines, repeating familiar movement patterns, demonstrating movements clearly and giving one instruction at a time can make a significant difference for young learners.

We also explored how the language we use influences children's understanding. Instead of saying "Stand still," we might invite children to "Freeze like a statue." Young children respond particularly well to concrete, visual language and playful learning experiences.

Movement stories, rhythm games, animal walks and imaginative activities are not simply fun—they are developing the very motor skills that later support technical skill.

Seeing Behaviour Through a Developmental Lens
One of the most valuable discussions during the workshop centred on recognising that movement challenges are often developmental rather than behavioural.

Children who need repeated demonstrations, become frustrated with unfamiliar tasks or require additional time to learn movement sequences are often working hard to develop the underlying skills needed for success.

Viewing these behaviours through a developmental lens allows us to respond with patience, encouragement and teaching strategies that build confidence rather than frustration.

Every Child Develops Differently

A key message throughout the session was that child development is not a race.

There is considerable variation in what is considered typical between the ages of three and six. Appreciating these individual differences helps teachers create developmentally appropriate expectations while celebrating each child's progress.

Thank You

Thank you to everyone who attended the workshop and shared your insights. Your passion for nurturing young dancers was truly inspiring.

I hope this overview has sparked curiosity about the connection between child development and learning in the ballet studio. I look forward to exploring more ideas together at future WA Classical Ballet Teachers Association professional development events.

I'd love to connect with you. You can find me on Instagram at @Solveigh_kids_ot, on Facebook at /paediatricOTperth, or at www.paediatricOT.com.au



Creating Engaging & Effective Pre-School Dance Classes

By Terrie Wayside, June 2026



"The job of every 3 through 6 year old is pretend play. Pretend play is one of the most important aspects a teacher can bring into their early childhood class." Dr. Annie Spell

Pretend play is recognised as an essential part of early childhood development. Through imaginative movement, storytelling and creative exploration, young children build confidence, language skills, social connection and problem-solving abilities while learning about the world around them. In a dance environment, pretend play transforms learning into an engaging adventure, allowing children to develop coordination, musicality and self-expression in a joyful and age-appropriate way. By embracing imagination, children are not only learning dance skills — they are developing the foundations for lifelong learning.

In our recent interactive workshop we discussed and explored:

- Foundations of Teaching Pre-Schoolers
- Building an Effective Pre-School Dance Class
- Practical Teaching Strategies
- Effective Communication with Parents and Dancers
- Creating a Positive & Memorable Experience

Teaching dance is such a privilege and it's also a great responsibility. We have the capacity to help shape little human beings, not only their physical abilities, but also help them to develop healthy self-esteem, confidence and resilience. Every child deserves to feel seen, safe, and valued for WHO they are, not their achievements.

My Top Tip for teaching Pre-Schoolers : Be Flexible

Class plans are essential when teaching little people. I would say the younger the child, the more you need to be prepared, and yet, you also need to be prepared to go off script when things don't go to YOUR plan. There are so many variables that can affect how your class runs, and it is up to the teacher to respond to the children in front of them, rather than react (from their own frustration). **"Breathe before you speak"** is a valuable motto of mine.

Children are not usually disruptive to spite you, they may be bored (if the class is too easy or too hard), they may be tired, they may be too hot, different personalities bouncing off each other, and the list goes on. Rather than getting upset, a valuable question to ask yourself may be **"How can I meet the children where they are at in this present moment?"** And the answer may be as simple of allowing an activity that gives their brain a break.



One of my favourite breaks is a bag of scarves. Allowing the children to scrunch up the scarves in their hands helps them to organise and regulate their nervous system.

For example, you might say:

"Let's make our scarf into a tiny ball. Squeeze it really tight... tighter... and now slowly let it open." Or simply scrunch up the scarf and then throw it in the air and catch.

Just because a class plan worked perfectly with one group of children, there is no guarantee it will achieve the same results with another. Every group is different, with its own personalities, abilities, energy levels and learning needs. I encourage everyone reading this to be prepared to adapt, progress or regress your class plan as needed, so that the children you are teaching right now remain engaged, challenged and supported to learn at a level that is appropriate for them.

And remember to BREATHE !!!



CERT IV Experience

by Matilda Oakes



“

I genuinely feel the qualification covered everything a junior dance teacher needs to know to *begin teaching with confidence.*”

— MATILDA OAKES

Over the two years from 2024 to 2026, I completed the Certificate IV in Dance Teaching and Management with Empower Dance, supported by the West Australian Classical Ballet Teachers Association (WACBTA).

As a lifelong ballet student at Helene Gowers Ballet School, ballet has been a hugely significant part of my life, helping to shape me into the person I am today. After finishing school, I knew I wanted to pass on the fulfilment and joy of dance education to future students, so they too could have the same positive experiences that I had.

The Certificate IV both empowered and challenged me to expand and refine my teaching skills. As a junior dance teacher, it provided an excellent pathway to develop a deeper understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and challenges involved in both dance teaching and dance school management.

The flexible, self-paced learning option was invaluable while I was studying full-time at university and working part-time outside of ballet. The team at Empower Dance were always responsive whenever I needed support and were approachable, knowledgeable, and genuinely lovely to communicate with.

I was particularly impressed by the balance of practical and theoretical learning. From studying anatomy in a dance context and learning emergency procedures for the classroom, to choreographing dance works and designing a new website for my dance school, every component felt relevant and worthwhile. I genuinely feel the qualification covered everything a junior dance teacher needs to know to begin teaching with confidence.

I would highly recommend this qualification to anyone looking to begin their dance teaching journey. If you're considering becoming a dance teacher, I encourage you to reach out to the West Australian Classical Ballet Teachers Association to learn how they can support you in taking the next step towards your teaching qualifications.



CERT IV Scholarship Winner 2026

by Raija Karhunen



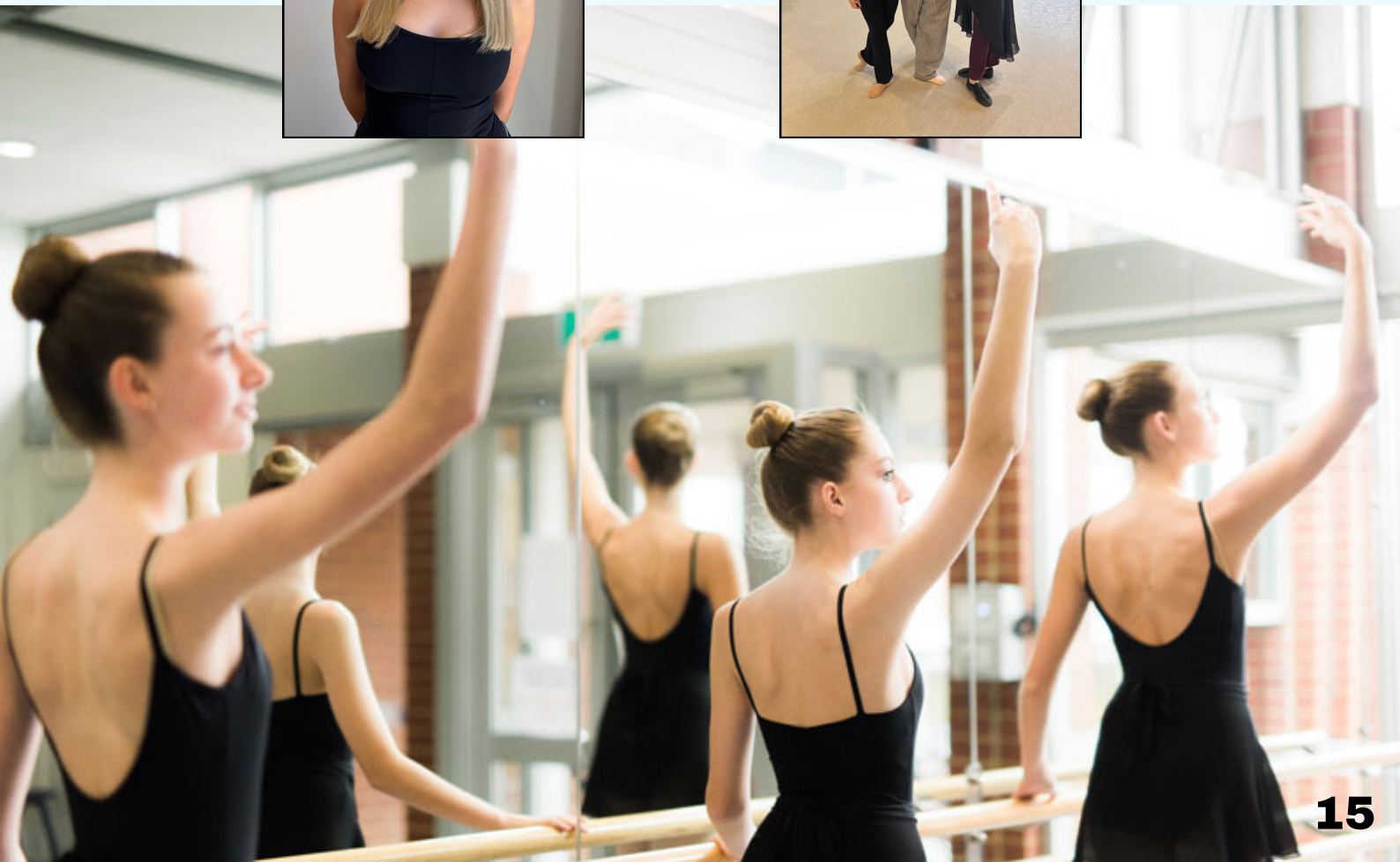
Since the age of sixteen, I have been teaching independently and alongside Kira Bousloff Ballet School Director, Emily Riddell, with the aim of sharing my love of ballet with the next generation.

I have completed up to Advanced 2 level of the Borovansky syllabus, successfully passing all of my exams, the majority at Honours level, and receiving five special awards for my efforts. After completing my Advanced 1 grade, I wanted to formalise my teaching qualifications and completed my Associate Diploma through the Australian Institute of Classical Dance in 2023.

I was introduced to the Certificate IV in Dance Teaching and Management at a professional development course run by WACBTA and was very generously awarded a sponsorship towards completing my studies. I hope the certificate will further strengthen my technical understanding of ballet and my knowledge of health and safety, while also giving me the opportunity to explore my creativity through choreography.

Looking to the future, I hope to combine my ballet teaching skills and knowledge with a degree in occupational therapy, with the goal of becoming a paediatric occupational therapist.

Raija Karhunen



Swan Lake Summer: Beyond the Barre

By Robyn Cooper



A collaborative ballet experience for dancers, teachers and families

The WA Classical Ballet Teachers' Association Inc. is delighted to announce an exciting new initiative for January 2027:

Swan Lake Summer: Beyond the Barre

To be held in Perth from 11–15 January 2027, Swan Lake Summer is more than a traditional ballet intensive. It has been designed as a collaborative and immersive experience that brings together dancers, teachers and families in a shared exploration of ballet training, artistry, communication and personal growth.

At the centre of the programme is internationally respected master teacher **Scott Putman**, creator of the **Elemental Body Alignment System (EBAS)**.

Many summer schools focus primarily on technique and performance outcomes. While technical development remains an important part of Swan Lake Summer, the programme has been created to explore a broader question:

How do we help dancers become not only stronger technicians, but more confident, expressive, resilient and self-aware artists?

The result is a unique learning experience that integrates ballet training, choreography, embodied learning, artistic development and meaningful dialogue between the people who support young dancers – teachers and parents.

What will participants experience?

Students will participate in daily ballet classes, creative workshops, choreography and dance-making sessions inspired by the themes and music of Swan Lake. There will also be classes in character, contemporary and lyrical dance and ballet mime.

Each day will begin with a one-hour EBAS session and conclude with guided EBAS stretching and reflection, allowing dancers to develop a deeper understanding of alignment, movement pathways and efficient use of the body.

The Elemental Body Alignment System (EBAS) is a series of exercises designed for structural integrity and supported range of motion. Through anchoring and initiating movements via the pelvis, the body discovers its ability to efficiently articulate movement through experiential anatomy.

Throughout the week, dancers will be encouraged not only to learn movement, but to understand where movement comes from, how it is organised within the body, and how technique can be transformed into artistic expression.

A programme for more than just students

One of the most distinctive aspects of Swan Lake Summer is its commitment to **bringing together the entire ballet community**.

Parents will be invited to participate in dedicated dialogue sessions with Scott Putman and other faculty members, exploring topics such as:

- Supporting young dancers
- Communication and corrections
- Building confidence and resilience
- Understanding different ballet pathways
- Navigating both recreational and pre-professional training journeys

Swan Lake Summer: Beyond the Barre

By Robyn Cooper



Teachers will have opportunities to observe classes and participate in discussions throughout the week, culminating in a dedicated professional development day focused on teaching practice, communication, embodied learning and the integration of EBAS principles into ballet education.

These conversations recognise that a dancer's development does not occur in isolation. When students, parents and teachers share understanding and work collaboratively, the learning experience becomes richer and more effective for everyone involved.

Why Swan Lake?

The iconic ballet provides both inspiration and a creative framework for the programme.

As well as reproducing existing choreography, students will explore the themes, characters, atmosphere and artistic ideas behind Swan Lake through creative movement, dance-making and performance projects.

This process encourages curiosity, imagination and ownership, helping dancers discover not only how ballet works, but why it continues to resonate with audiences around the world.

More than training

At its heart, Swan Lake Summer is about creating an environment where dancers can thrive.

It is about asking questions, encouraging exploration, supporting communication and helping dancers build a deeper relationship with their art form. By involving parents and teachers with the students' learning, Swan Lake Summer endeavours to take the education beyond the classroom with its innovative approach to teaching, holistic dancer development, community, and professional learning.

Whether a student dreams of a professional career or simply loves dancing, the programme aims to provide valuable skills, insights and experiences that will continue to influence their ballet journey long after the week has ended.



Swan Lake Summer: Beyond the Barre

11–15 January 2027

Perth, Western Australia

More than training. It's transformation.

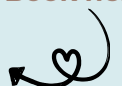
Further information will be available via the WACBTA website:
wacbta.org.au

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Swan Lake Summer: Scholarship Winners

By Robyn Cooper



We are delighted to present Amy Stump and Kylie Supan, winners of the WACBTA scholarships to attend our Swan Lake Summer, our exciting ballet experience in January 2027. These scholarships were offered at the recent Australasian Classical Gala, for students who the judging panel believed demonstrated the following attributes:

- A genuine passion for learning and personal growth.
- Curiosity and openness to new ideas and different approaches to training.
- Willingness to embrace artistic exploration as well as technical development.
- Respect, generosity and professionalism towards teachers and fellow dancers.
- Commitment, perseverance and a positive attitude throughout the Australasian Classical Gala.

Congratulations, Amy and Kylie, and we look forward to seeing you in January!

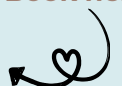


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Benefits of a Corporate Membership

by WACBTA



Ready to Level Up Your Studio?

A Corporate Membership with the WA Classical Ballet Teachers' Association Inc. might just be your studio's new secret weapon.

If you're committed to excellence (and we know you are), corporate membership is more than a badge on the wall — it's a practical, professional boost for you, your teachers, and your students.

Here's what's in it for you:

🌟 Professional Development

Access live and online events throughout 2025, plus curated expert resources to keep your teachers inspired and up to date.

👉 Genuine Networking

Connect with fellow studio owners and ballet professionals across Perth. Collaborations, shared wisdom, new opportunities — it all starts with conversation.

🚩 Promotion & Visibility

Your studio listed on our Members' Register? Yes please. Corporate members are featured on our website and if you wish, you can request a certificate to proudly display — a visible commitment to quality training.

💎 Member Discounts

Reduced entry fees to WACBTA events mean more learning for less.

🎓 Teacher Scholarships

Your staff may be eligible for member-exclusive scholarships — helping you nurture the next generation of qualified ballet educators.

🧠 Advocacy & Support

We champion classical ballet education in WA and provide guidance when you need it. Corporate membership isn't just an affiliation — it's a statement. It says your studio values professional standards, lifelong learning, and investing in teachers.

So... ready to step confidently into 2026 with support behind you?

Visit <https://wacbta.org.au/> to learn more or contact us at admin@wacbta.org.au | 0417 170 969.

Let's keep raising the barre together. 🩰

