

Member Profile



Mardi Roberts-Bolton Dance Educator

When did you start dancing?

I started nagging my mother about dance classes when I was five years old. It took until I was eight for her to be convinced that I was really, really serious about learning to dance. I began with Ballet at the Bryan Lawrence school of Ballet. My very first teacher was Diana Sandeman and then later I ended up teaching her!

What do you love about dancing?

I love the way it makes me feel. There's something in me that just can't stop moving to music - even elevator music!



What do you love about teaching /sharing dance?

Teaching and sharing dance allows me the opportunity to acknowledge how dance makes me feel good about myself and the world, then further allows me to help others learn to feel good about themselves and the world through the medium of dance.

I enjoy the opportunity to turn negative perceptions about dance into positive experiences. The school system gives me an opportunity to make dance accessible to young people who may be afraid of dance, afraid of movement, afraid of being judged. Some students may have had a previously "bad" experience which has resulted in them to have a very negative emotional relationship with dance. I derive an immense sense of satisfaction when students change their perception through the course of a term and end up having a really positive experience in dance. It may not be something they do again, but they have learned to respect the art form.

What is your favourite dance style and why?

I like many different dance styles, ballet, theatre jazz... I like watching hip hop and tap. My favourite dance style is contemporary dance, simply because

it allows you to move without rules. There are no "incorrect" movements, you have the freedom to move with music or without.

Have you faced any challenges during your dance career so far?

Teaching dance in a school environment is beset with a particular set of challenges. The largest of these is the culture of the school itself. Some schools are not able to fully embrace dance and initially, it can

be difficult to build support and gain encouragement from staff, students and the executive. This is not an insurmountable obstacle, and this is a challenge I have overcome.

The more immediate challenge comes in the form of students who have been enrolled in dance classes and don't really want to be there. The potential for negativity and a disruption to the building of trust between class mates is very real. These students often have a "block" with dance and are not willing to participate in the class. This is a more difficult challenge, but is very rewarding to find a place where that student moves forward with a new found respect for dance.

What do you find inspiring?

Music & kids. Kids achieving in dance, regardless of their level of experience is very inspiring. I am also inspired when seeing students preparing for performance and soon afterwards when the personal sense of achievement is clearly visible on their faces.

What have you been most proud of in your dance career so far?

Luck and a lot of hard work had me touring through Europe and Melbourne, dancing Ballet and Contemporary, for about nine years. What I am proud of is the ability to take that knowledge, at that level and share it with others. I feel that I am able to bring a real high quality of dance to the students' experiences.

I also feel proud that dance - in every style, in its entirety, is well regarded in the school I am at. No dance style is seen as better or worse, all of them are respected.

What are your plans for this year? The next few years?

I am hoping, as a very long term goal now that I have my Certificate 4 in Training and Assessment, that I might be able to develop some certificate courses in dance. High School students, particularly those at risk, could use this level of certification as a pathway to something else and give them an area where they can achieve.

In the shorter term, I am looking forward to presenting the Ausdance Skill Set for Teaching Dance with Philip Piggin next year.