



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

**Canberra's leading community dance organisation**



## **Celebrating 45 years of Dance in Canberra!**

### **Our Vision is**

to be a vibrant, diverse and sustainable community dance organisation for the ACT region.

### **Our Goal is**

to provide quality dance classes, performances and projects through engagement with our community, professional artists and organisations.

**Patron Dr Graham Farquhar AO, FAA, FRS, NAS**

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**Front Cover: The happy crowd of dancers after the Great Big Community Dance in Civic Square to celebrate CDT's 45th Birthday.**



**Tanamasi Drummers, choreographers and dance leaders for CDT's 45th birthday celebrations.**

## **Photo credits:**

**ArtAtelier Photography, Jenny Atkins, Callum Bowen, Max Burgess, Marian Darmody, Matt Dolin, Bella Dunk, Sue Healey, Zoe Mylordis, Lorna Sim, Jacqui Simmonds.**

## Office Bearers Elected May 2023

Position	Office Bearer	Date Appointed	Date Resigned
Chair	Pam Diver	29 May 2023	-
Secretary	Susan Andrews	29 May 2023	-
Treasurer	Cameron Ong	29 May 2023	-
Member	Greg Barret	29 May 2023	-
Member	Gretel Burgess	29 May 2023	-
Member	Frances Cristodoulou	29 May 2023	-

### Ex Officio Board Member

Artistic Director	Jacqui Simmonds	April 2017	-
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## Thanks to all our Donors and Volunteers

CDT greatly appreciates any financial support we receive from members. We are also very grateful for the support of everyone who contributed to the events of the year through their time, energy, ideas and commitment.



**Canberra Dance Theatre is a registered charity.**



# Chair's Report

**What a great way to celebrate our 45 years of leading community dance in Canberra! A fabulous public event coordinated by our Artistic Director, Jacqui Simmonds, with live music, lots of friends dancing with us in City Square, and birthday cake!**

In May CDT displayed the diversity of our dancers in a program of three original works presented at the National Portrait Gallery as part of *Identity*, Ausdance ACT's Australian Dance Week final concert.

Later in the year it was very pleasing for GOLD to finally be able to work with Elizabeth Cameron Dalman to complete *Lake Song*. This was the last of the major projects planned for GOLD's tenth anniversary in 2021 and the finished work was recorded in a beautiful video directed by Sue Healey. We hope to find public performance opportunities for this stunning work in the future.

This will be my final Annual Report as Chair — I have been on the CDT Board for ten years, eight of those as Chair, so I have decided it's a good time to leave the Board. I am very proud of the progress the whole organisation has made over the past ten years.

- We have updated the CDT Constitution to comply with changing regulations and to streamline our governance processes. This has also enabled CDT to achieve registered charity status.
- We have moved from close to bankrupt to a very healthy bank balance, thanks to the careful guidance of our Treasurers over the last ten years, Margaret Vincent and Cameron Ong.
- We successfully navigated the Covid restrictions and came out ahead financially.
- We have improved staff employment conditions and kept class prices as low as possible.

I am sure the new Board will continue to advance CDT's objectives in the future.

**On behalf of the Board I would like to thank all our members, volunteers, teachers and staff for their ongoing support for CDT.**

**And remember to keep on dancing — it's good for you!**

**Pam Diver**



# Treasurer's Report

Canberra Dance Theatre's financial result for the year ended 31 December 2023 was a deficit of \$14,040. This result mainly reflects one-off expenditures to support several large projects, including CDT's 45th Anniversary celebrations and GOLD's *Lake Song* project. I hope all members would agree that activities like these are worthy investments to promote a healthy love of dance in the wider ACT community.

CDT's balance sheet is in good financial health, reflected in CDT's cash holdings that amounted to \$103,368 at year's end. The Board has implemented a savings strategy to invest a proportion of the cash reserves into savings accounts and term deposits, which will generate a steady stream of interest income into the future.

CDT's recurrent budget remains at a sustainable and balanced level. The Board continues to monitor and respond to rising costs, while seeking to keep dance classes as affordable as possible for members and maintaining fair rates of pay for our teachers and staff. The success of this approach has allowed CDT's dance class prices to be kept at the same level since 2019, a major achievement in the face of rising inflation!

In line with the development of CDT's Strategic Plan, the Board will seek to maintain sustainable budgets into the future. In 2024, we plan to establish a framework to receive tax-deductible donations so we can create a fund to support CDT's objectives. Through this budget strategy, the Board aims to broaden the support for future CDT dance projects and create new opportunities for dance artists to work with us.

All our Members can keep doing one big thing to support CDT's success — that's spreading the word and bringing along new dancers to class. Not only does this help support the whole CDT community, it's also sharing the joy of dance!

**Cameron Ong**



**REVEL dancers performing *From, Amongst, Within* as part of Dance Week at the National Portrait Gallery.**

# Artistic Director's Report

2023 marked CDT's 45th birthday — an impressive milestone for a community arts organisation whose income is generated primarily from our core business of partnering professional dance artists with community dance through classes and performance opportunities for adults.

Although Covid was still very much with us, 2023 saw the further development of stability that began in 2022. It was wonderful to plan for the year and for most of those plans to be realised.

GOLD had a particularly busy year, completing major projects started for their disrupted tenth birthday celebrations in 2021. Another highlight of the year was CDT's contribution to Australian Dance Week at the National Portrait Gallery.

## CDT Business Management

CDT continued to be managed by Jacqui Simmonds in the role of part-time Artistic Director, supported by members of the CDT Board including Pam Diver in her role as Chair of the Board and contributor to promotional materials, and Cameron Ong in his role as Treasurer and go-to person for all things technological. Ingrid Schodde continued as CDT's bookkeeper, and our dedicated team of Volunteer Administration Assistants continued to welcome students to their classes and assist them with enrolling on Bookeo.

## Regular Classes

Participation numbers for GOLD and CDTribe classes were pleasingly consistent over the year, also for Jenny Atkin's Beginner Ballet classes. From July, Jenny added a second pre-pointe class to the timetable. Ballet students were disappointed to hear of Mary Henley's resignation at the beginning of the year, and Cathy Leung's at the end of May.



**Cathy Leung's last class.**

We welcomed Margaret Taylor, Gabriella Raetz (briefly) and Catherine Szabo to the ballet teaching team. Levi Szabo added more classes to his load and developed a particularly strong following for his Saturday contemporary class. Sadly for CDT, Levi and Catherine left Canberra at the end of the year so Catherine could take up a medical internship in Sydney.



## Workshops

**REVEL Choreographic Project with Josh Freedman:** After the beautiful work he made for ballet dancers in 2022, CDT again invited Sydney-based Josh Freedman to make a work for CDT dancers. Over two weekends in April, he created *From, Amongst, Within* for the eleven dancers who signed up for this project: six from GOLD, three who attended contemporary classes, and two who attended ballet classes. Josh once again made a work that included contributions from individual dancers while focussing on group interaction.

**Winter Workshop Program:** Comprised Bellydance with Brooke Thomas and K-Pop with Liv Craig. In Spring, Rachael Hilton offered six weeks of Frolicsome Fun with Fans.



Brooke Thomas (left) and Rachel's Fan Dancers (right).

## GOLD

GOLD had a wide array of teachers through the year. Special mention must be made of Elise May who travelled from the NSW south coast four times to teach GOLD.

**Elizabeth Cameron Dalman:** GOLD were extremely fortunate to have many opportunities to work with Elizabeth Cameron Dalman, including her teaching regular GOLD classes throughout the year. In March many participated in Elizabeth's *Dance and Nature* project. Taking place at Gorman House and Mirramu Creative Arts Centre, this project enabled local dancers to do workshops with members of Ku and Dancers, and Dancecology, two companies visiting Mirramu from Taiwan. For the culminating performance event at Mirramu (26 March), GOLD performed a version of *Gathering Threads* on the sand stage they had helped to prepare.



Working on *Lake Song* at Mirramu.

Elizabeth spent a week with GOLD in September to complete the 'stage version' of her work *Lake Song*, commenced in 2021. With approval from artsACT, the small grant received in 2021 for GOLD's tenth anniversary was redirected toward a filmed version of *Lake Song*. Filming took place at Mirramu in November and GOLD dancers were delighted to have the opportunity to work again with award-winning filmmaker Sue Healey. Despite the hot weather GOLD adapted magnificently to the sometimes difficult terrain, including wading in Weereewa (Lake George) for the finale!



Filming *Lake Song* in Werriwa (Lake George).

**James Batchelor:** Ten dancers worked with James on the development of *Leaning, Rippling, Breathing* and premiered it in the foyer of the Canberra Theatre Centre on International Dance Day (29 April). Their performance, in the interval between performances in the Playhouse by James and Liz Lea, was great exposure for GOLD and a testament to how the group are valued in the ACT. The work was reprised at the National Portrait Gallery on 7 May as part of *Identity*, Ausdance ACT's concluding concert for Dance Week.



Performing *Leaning, Rippling, Breathing* at the Canberra Theatre Centre.





**Gold performing *No Regrets* at Canberra College.**

**Liz Lea:** Liz invited GOLD to participate in a film component of her project *And...Breathe*, another opportunity to work with Sue Healey. The film premiered at the National Film and Sound Archives on 22 April. For a second year, Liz's work *No Regrets* was performed as part of *A Stellar Lineup* I-Day concerts, this year at Canberra College (1 and 2 December). The dancers appreciated returning to this work and refining their ability to communicate its message of celebrating the joys of life.

**Huge thanks to Philip Piggin for his very thorough and attentive work through the year rehearsing GOLD works for performances.**

## **CDTribe**

**Amy Macris** continued to be the regular and much loved teacher of the Saturday morning classes throughout the year.

In June, **Gretel Burgess** offered a very successful choreographic workshop. Five members of CDTribe attended the four-hour workshop and explored a range of ways into dance making.



**CDTribe had fun dressing up for Halloween.**

## Major Performances

### Australian Dance Week 2023

Ausdance ACT generously gave CDT one hour of Dance Week's concluding program, *Identity*, held at the National Portrait Gallery on 7 May. Our offering comprised a short warm up for all our dancers led by Philip Piggin, followed by James Batchelor's *Leaning, Rippling, Breathing* for GOLD, Gretel Burgess's *Today I Am* for CDTribe, and Josh Freedman's *From, Amongst, Within* for REVEL.



Performing at the National Portrait Gallery: Group warm-up (top), CDTribe in *Today I Am* (left) and REVEL in *From, Amongst, Within* (right).

### CDT's 45th Birthday

Over 120 people attended CDT's 45th Birthday event in Civic Square on Sunday 15 October. The event, inspired by the Stephanie Lake project *Massive*, was developed to promote inclusivity and community, dance as a participatory activity, and that dance is fun.

Two rounds of taster classes, led by six different movement teachers, got the crowd warmed up before they were invited to participate in the **Great Big Community Dance**. Over 20 minutes in length, this dance was a combination of sections created by five choreographers. It was designed so that participants could follow the strategically placed leaders – the only people who needed to know the dance beforehand.

The dance was accompanied by the **Tanamasi drummers**, under the leadership of Wayne Alford. The music ably filled the Square and beyond and was very energising to dance to. We appreciated having CDT's Patron, Dr Graham Farquhar AO, attend and do the honours cutting the delicious birthday cake baked by Jill Fraser. We were very grateful for the logistics support provided by Brooke Thomas and the staff of the Cultural Facilities Corporation.





**Asking participants to wear bright colours guaranteed that the crowd was very colourful!**

Heartfelt thanks to:

- Our fabulous musicians: Tanamasi Drummers led by Wayne Alford.
- The Choreographers: Gretel Burgess, Max Burgess, Rachael Hilton, Levi Szabo and Jacqui Simmonds.
- The Group Leaders: Grace Bannister-Tyrrell, Paulette Boorman, Gretel Burgess (in her wheelchair!), Vilaisan Campbell, Suzanne Carroll, Karina Carter, Frances Christodoulou, Rachael Hilton, Melissa Lee, Alison Plevy, Edwina Saddington, Diana Sandeman and Levi Szabo.
- The Teachers of the Taster Classes: Naomi Atkins (Zumba), Ben Brikcius (Strength and Flexibility), Rachael Hilton (Hilal), Philip Piggan (Dance for Seniors), Alison Plevy (Site Specific) and Levi Szabo (Contemporary).
- The Advisory Group: Karyn Ang, Gretel Burgess, Frances Christodoulou and Janet Simpson.
- Members of the CDT Board and GOLD for their valuable support.
- Everyone who contributed cup-cakes!

**The event was photographed by Andrew Sikorski (ArtAtelier) and videoed by Trent Housenloge (Cowboy Hat Films) – an edited version of the video can be viewed on CDT's website.**

## House Parties

The Winter and Christmas House Parties were very well attended. A highlight of the Winter event was a surprise final work: CD Tribe's *Thank You Dance for Amy*, choreographed by Brydie Bulley.



**Amy Macris being crowned by Neave Darmody at the Winter House Party (centre).  
Ballet belles (left and right) at the Christmas House Party.**

## Artists In Residence



**Bella Dunk** (left) completed her 2022 residency during the first two weeks of January, culminating in a short showing presented by four dancers.

**Max Burgess and Josh Freedman** (centre and right) worked together on a project for two weeks in February, also culminating in a showing in the CDT studio.

## Hirers

CDT continued our relationship with ongoing hirers No Lights No Lycra, Strength and Flexibility, and Zumba with Naomi. Requests from new hirers, usually for short-term or one-off events, tend to be seasonal.

We greatly appreciated the contributions of Ben Brikcius (Strength and Flexibility) and Naomi Atkins (Zumba with Naomi) to the Taster Classes at CDT's 45th birthday event.

## Sponsored Event

CDT again provided free rehearsal space during July for Brooke Thomas's *Most Wuthering Heights Day Ever* project which raises funds to support the ACT Domestic Violence Crisis Service.





# CDT Teachers

As always, a huge thankyou to all our regular teachers for their ongoing commitment to teaching inspirational classes, to our special guests, and to the teachers who often stepped in at the last minute to cover a class.

## Ballet

- Jenny Atkins
- Cathy Leung
- Gabriella Ratz
- Levi Szabo
- Margaret Taylor

## CDTribe

- Amy Macris

## Contemporary

- Jacqui Simmonds
- Levi Szabo

## GOLD

- Max Burgess
- Elizabeth Cameron Dalman
- Charmaine Hallam
- Kirsty Hilson
- Rachael Hilton
- Jane Ingall
- Liz Lea
- Elise May
- Padma Menon
- Elle Morris
- Philip Piggin
- Alison Plevey
- Jacqui Simmonds
- Olivia Wikner

## Hilal

- Rachael Hilton

## Special Guests and Covers

- James Batchelor
- Gretel Burgess
- Max Burgess
- Liv Craig
- Josh Freedman
- Julia Gillett
- Mary Henley
- Jake Kuzma
- Lexie Minehan
- Luke Mulders
- Rhiannon Newton
- Alison Plevey
- Andrew Rushby
- Gabriel Sinclair
- Brooke Thomas
- Josh Walsh
- Dominique Wood-Ward



**Levi Szabo leading an enthusiastic crowd at the 45th Birthday Party.**

## CDT Performances 2023

- Saturday 21 January: CDT Studio, informal showing of project work resulting from Bella Dunk's 2022 residency.
- Friday 10 February: CDT Studio, informal showing of *Post-Modern Dances for Homoerotic Trances*, developed over two weeks by Artists in Residence Max Burgess and Josh Freedman.
- Sunday 26 March: Mirramu Creative Arts Centre, *Dance in Nature* International Dance Residency and workshops performance day. GOLD performed a new version of *Gathering Threads*, directed by Jacqui Simmonds and inspired by Weereewa (Lake George) and the surrounding landscape.
- Friday 14 April: CDT Studio, informal showing of *Leaning, Rippling, Breathing*, developed in a week-long GOLD workshop with James Batchelor.
- Saturday 22 April: National Film and Sound Archive, World Earth Day program of five dance films including the premiere of *And...Breathe*, a film by Sue Healey including CDT dancers.
- Saturday 29 April: Canberra Theatre Centre Foyer, GOLD premiered *Leaning, Rippling, Breathing* during the interval of the *Batchelor and Lea* performance for International Dance Day, part of Ausdance ACT's Australian Dance Week program.
- Sunday 7 May: National Portrait Gallery, Ausdance ACT presented *Identity* performances. CDT demonstrated an inclusive warm-up session and showed works by GOLD, CDTribe and REVEL.
- Saturday 1 July: CDT Studio, Winter House Party, eleven items.
- Friday 15 September: CDT Studio, informal showing of *Lake Song*, choreographed by Elizabeth Cameron Dalman in collaboration with the GOLD dancers, developed in a week-long workshop.
- Sunday 15 October: Civic Square, *Communities Dancing Together*, CDT's 45th Birthday Celebration with free Taster Classes presented by six movement teachers, followed by the Great Big Community Dance accompaniment by Tanamasi Drummers.
- Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 November: Mirramu Creative Arts Centre, *Lake Song* was filmed by Sue Healey in various outdoor locations to create a video version of the work.
- Friday 1 and Saturday 2 December: Canberra College Performing Arts Centre Theatre, *A Stellar Lineup*, directed by Liz Lea for I-Day, included performances by Hilal and GOLD.
- Saturday 9 December: CDT Studio, Christmas House Party, 13 items.



**CDTribe demonstrate their dynamic style at the Winter House Party**