

For immediate release Thursday 2 February 2012

Six dancers vie for Australian ballet's highest honour 2012 Telstra Ballet Dancer Award nominations announced today



2012 Telstra Ballet Dancer Award nominees: Amy Harris, Jarryd Madden, Jake Mangakahia, Ako Kondo, Dimity Azoury, Calvin Hannaford. Photography James Braund

Six talented young dancers are in the running to take home The Australian Ballet's highest honour, with the 2012 Telstra Ballet Dancer Award (TBDA) nominations announced today in Melbourne.

The 2012 Telstra Ballet Dancer Award nominees are **Dimity Azoury** (Queanbeyan, NSW), **Calvin Hannaford** (Camberwell, VIC), **Amy Harris** (Ararat, Vic), **Ako Kondo** (Nagoya, Japan), **Jarryd Madden** (Wauchope, NSW) and **Jake Mangakahia** (Sunshine Coast, QLD).

In 2012 real-life ballet couple Amy Harris and Jarryd Madden will go head-to-head in their quest for TBDA glory, a first for the Award.

Introduced in 2003 to encourage young Australian ballet dancers to reach their full potential, the Telstra Ballet Dancer Award has catapulted some of The Australian Ballet's brightest stars into the stratosphere.

Last year Chengwu Guo created history by being the first male dancer to win both the Telstra Ballet Dancer Award and Telstra People's Choice Award.

Five previous TBDA winners have ascended the ballet rankings to reach principal artist status, including Matthew Lawrence (2003), Amber Scott (2004), Lana Jones (2005), Daniel Gaudiello (2007) and Kevin Jackson (2008).

Telstra Group Managing Director, Applications and Ventures, Deena Shiff, said the Award was an

important part of rewarding and recognizing talent within the ranks of the company.

"The announcement of the Telstra Ballet Dancer Award nominees is always an exciting occasion. The fact we're celebrating 50 years of The Australian Ballet this year makes it even more special."

"We are also delighted to announce Telstra has committed to continuing our support of the ballet for a further three years. We look forward to celebrating 30 years of this successful partnership in 2014."

This year's nominees were chosen by The Australian Ballet's artistic staff, previous winners of the award and principal artists. The six dancers were judged on their performances throughout 2011, the ongoing development of their skills and their support of fellow company members.

The winner, announced near the end of 2012, will be decided by an industry panel – comprising of representatives from The Australian Ballet, Telstra and the media – and will receive a \$20,000 cash prize from Telstra. The People's Choice Award has a \$5,000 prize and is decided by public vote.

To vote for your favourite dancer, SMS their first name to 0439 BALLETT (0439 225 538) or go to telstra.com/ballet to enter online and see full terms and conditions.

Telstra has given each nominee a BlackBerry to tweet about their TBDA journey. The nominees can be followed as they tweet about their rehearsals, performances and all the news from backstage at The Australian Ballet.

Audiences can see the 2012 TBDA nominees perform in *Infinity* which opens in Melbourne on 24 February before travelling to Sydney on 5 April. Ballet fans in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth can catch the dancers during the upcoming seasons of Graeme Murphy's *Romeo & Juliet*. Tickets are available now from australianballet.com.au.

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2012 Telstra Ballet Dancer Award nominees

Dimity Azoury

Dimity began dancing at the age of four in her home town of Queanbeyan, New South Wales. She studied for eleven years at the Kim Harvey School of Dance in Canberra before moving to Melbourne to join The Australian Ballet School in 2005. There she travelled to America and Canada on exchange and to the Prix de Lausanne in Switzerland. She joined The Australian Ballet in 2008.

You may not know...

Dimity adopted a pet dog from the Greyhound Adoption program.

Calvin Hannaford

Calvin grew up in the Melbourne suburb of Camberwell. He started his dance training at the age of three at the Bartuccio's School of Dance where he studied jazz and singing. He began his full-time dance training at age 12 at the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School. In 2006 Calvin was a semi-finalist at the Beijing International Ballet Invitational for Dance Schools competition. Calvin began his three-year course at The Australian Ballet School in 2007 and joined The Australian Ballet in 2010.

You may not know...

Calvin has a fear of spiders.

Amy Harris

Amy was born in Ararat, Victoria and at the age of three began jazz and tap classes at her local ballet school, Rosengreens School of Dancing. From the age of ten, Amy trained in the Cecchetti method with Carole Oliver School of Ballet in Ballarat, and as a Cecchetti scholar won bronze and silver medals. In 1999, aged 15, Amy successfully auditioned for The Australian Ballet School. She joined The Australian Ballet in 2002, and was promoted to coryphée in 2007 and soloist in 2011. Amy won the Telstra People's Choice Award in 2008 and 2010.

You may not know...

Amy loves photography and music and finds herself snapping away and going to live gigs whenever she can.

Ako Kondo

Ako was born in Nagoya, Japan in 1991. At the age of three she began her dance training at Shiho Kanazawa Ballet Studio. In 2005 Ako won second prize at the Japan Grand Prix and in 2006 she studied at The Royal Ballet School's International Summer School. In 2007 she was awarded The Australian Ballet School Tuition Scholarship, which was announced at the Youth America Grand Prix. Ako toured with The Dancers Company in 2008 and in 2010 she joined The Australian Ballet. She was promoted to coryphée for the 2012 season.

You may not know...

Ako loves wearing Yumiko leotards and owns lots of them!

Jarryd Madden

Encouraged by his dance teacher mother, Jarryd started dancing at the age of three at his local dance school in Wauchope, New South Wales. He remained there until 2005 when he joined Melbourne's National Theatre Ballet School. After a guest stint with The Australian Ballet during the 2007 season of Peter Wright's *The Nutcracker*, Jarryd officially joined the company at the beginning of 2008 and was promoted to coryphée in 2011.

You may not know...

Jarryd is a huge music fan. He plays the bass guitar and loves listening to his favourite bands Foo Fighters, Muse and Audioslave.

Jake Mangakahia

Jake was born on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland. As soon as his parents discovered his affinity with music, they put him into dance classes. At the age of ten Jake successfully auditioned for The Australian Ballet School; he left after a year to travel around Australia with his family. In 2007 Jake returned to the School and received an Award of Excellence and a Travelling Scholarship for the Overseas Exchange Program. Jake joined The Australian Ballet in 2011.

You may not know...

Jake loves hip hop and can do the haka.

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