# DRILL PERFORMANCE COMPANY INC.

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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# Snapshot of 2022

## PERFORMANCES

* dissolving labels
* Collective Writing – Collective Dancing
* Dance Nexus – Glenorchy
* A CALL TO ARMS (Film)

## STATISTICS

* 214 Rehearsals/workshops across all projects
* over 500 individual participants
* over 800 attendances at performances
* 28 artists and technical staff engaged

## KEY ARTISTS ENGAGED

* Isabella Stone - Artistic Director
* H.K. Vermeulen *–* Choreographer*, Dance Nexus Glenorchy* and *Still Drompin*
* Keia McGrady *–* Choreographer*, Dance Nexus Glenorchy*
* Izaak Bishop *– Filmmaker, dissolving labels, Dance Nexus Glenorchy, Collective Writing - Collective Dancing*
* Pippa Samaya *-* Filmmaker and photographer *A CALL TO ARMS*
* Tara Samaya *–* Choreographer and director *A CALL TO ARMS*
* Billie Rankin - Director, *dissolving labels*
* Davina Wright – Director, *dissolving labels*
* Richie Cyngler - Sound design and music*, dissolving labels*
* Chris Jackson – Lighting designer and production manager, *dissolving labels*
* Steph Francis – lighting operator, *dissolving labels*
* Caitlin Comerford – workshop, *Still Drompin*
* Nathan Pitchford - workshop, *Still Drompin* Adam Wheeler- workshop, *Still Drompin* Bec Dundas (Nee Jones) - workshop, *Still Drompin* Rikki Mace - workshop, *Still Drompin* Gabriel Comerford - workshop, *Still Drompin*
* Angela Barnard - workshop, *Still Drompin*
* Bonnie Que – Story leader, *Collective Writing – Collective Dancing*
* Gabrielle Martin – Choreographer, *Collective Writing – Collective Dancing*

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

* Support for early career artist Keia McGrady as choreographer for Dance Nexus
* Support for early career artist Gabrielle Martin as choreographer for Junior Company
* Support for senior company member Curtis Thorpe for AYDF
* Support for senior company member Evelyn Bryan in a volunteer position for Junior Company
* DRILL Senior Companies attended a palawa/pakana cultural awareness session with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre as part of *dissolving labels*

## DRILL in the Community

DRILL delivered a number of other activities throughout the year, many in partnership with other organisations including;

* A free dance workshop with Tasdance artist Jenni Large
* DRILL’s 2020 film *Leviathan* was screened as part of the City of Hobart’s “Our Window on Wellington” program, on their outdoor screen “The Loop;”
* Isabella Stone undertook professional development with Dancenorth in Townsville, and delivered a workshop as part of their *Deeper than Dancing* Program
* Delivery of workshops to young people as part of the Nayri Niara Festival;
* Delivery of a workshop as part of Moonah Arts Centre’s school holiday program.

# Chair’s report

While every year seems big, this one certainly stood out. Firstly I would like to acknowledge that this was the year we emerged from COVID to find the world somewhat changed.

2022 began with the wonderful Samaya Wives film project in the Tarkine. This was the last of the much-delayed pre COVID initiatives of our previous Artistic Director, Joshua Lowe. This project required a high level of complex arrangements, risk assessments, close interactions with several external partners and intrastate travel. Our AD Isabella Stone and GM Cathryn Williams met these challenges very capably allowing creatives and participants with varying levels of experience in this type of environment, a smooth and fulfilling experience.

In February our Secretary Erica Campbell Graham and I had to step aside for a few weeks and want to thank the Vice Chairs Sally Mollison and Carin Mistry for covering the workload in support of our staff. It is always a delight to see how the members of this voluntary board share their skills and are able to support the staff in the smooth functioning of the company.

With that in mind, we farewelled Vice Chair Carin Mistry, with her shift into working with MADE. We also welcomed new board members Steve Kyne, Sandi Doherty and Angela Barnard bringing new voices and wonderful levels of experience of the Company, dance, youth and arts funding.

As the year settled more into a ‘post COVID’ level of activity, Isabella carefully supported the young members of the company and guided projects which addressed issues of direct concern to them. The connection between the young peoples’ world view, their contributions and the final works was palpable and acknowledged by both participants and audiences.

From *dissolving labels* to *Dance Nexus* and the launch of *A Call to Arms* at the State Cinema, we were reminded of the strong voice of our young people and of the importance of community partnerships. TasPorts, Montrose Bay High, the Bob Brown Foundation and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, amongst others, were crucial to the success of our program.

Finally, it is with sadness that in April 2023 we will farewell Isabella, who has worked tirelessly for DRILL over the past three years. Replacing a founding Artistic Director and moving interstate would be enough for most; however, we will never forget the determination she showed when taking on the reins one week prior to COVID lock down. This was certainly not what she signed up for.

Isabella’s care for the young people of DRILL has been exceptional, consciously modelling very strong principles of support, mutual respect and care. During this period DRILL has demonstrated the strength and importance of a solid structure which can weather a pandemic storm and come out the other side with positive strategic directions for the future. We wish Isabella all the very best for her future endeavours in dance and life and hope that she feels Tasmania and DRILL will always be her second home.

As I close this report, we are about to welcome our new Artistic Director, Bec Dundas, after an exciting national recruitment process. We look forward to the opportunities this new appointment will bring.

Lesley Graham, Chair

## Samaya Wives Film Project – *A CALL TO ARMS*

In January 2022, DRILL delivered the first and in person stage of a long awaited project led by award winning dance film artists Tara and Pippa Samaya.

The ambitious project involved eight performers, including of members of the community, adult DRILL Senior Company members and alumni, partnered with the Bob Brown Foundation and worked closely with Tasmanian Aboriginal Heritage Officer Sharnie Read. The team came together to create content for a new dance film that explores topics of protest, conflict and hope and tells stories through bodies in a landscape of significance and history - the takayna/Tarkine in north west Tasmania. The film is an expression of the embodiment of protest, the importance of connection to place and, the power and importance of the land itself. It is about profiling and raising awareness of takayna/Tarkine through the collective voice framed and led by Tara and Pippa's creative practice.

The initial week of the project took Artistic Director Isabella Stone, Tara and Pippa Samaya and Sharnie Read to many areas of takayna/Tarkine. They scouted locations for filming, that could be approached sensitively and with cultural awareness of where and how to be as visitors (always) on Country. They crossed huge distances, from the coast to the depths of the old forest and were in awe of and informed by, the wildness, diversity, age and scale of takayna/Tarkine.

The following 2 weeks were conducted with participants in studio and then 6 days in takayna/Tarkine. It was an intensely focussed and immersive journey through the development of movement in studio to transferring and filming it on locations. The project achieved growth and development that was considered unparalleled by the artists, team members and participants. For some participants it was the first time they had visited that wild place of lutruwita/Tasmania. Everyone returned charged and changed by the landscape and many conversations over the week revealed the groups’ belief in small creative acts that can have huge impacts.

Pippa and Tara undertook the the process of editing and adding a soundtrack, and entitled the film *A CALL TO ARMS.*

It was premiered in nipaluna/Hobart at a sold out session in the State Cinema, held in partnership with the Bob Brown Foundation. Participants spoke about their experiences at the event, and there was a Q and A session after the screening.

Participants: 10

Audience: 180

Performance:

6.30pm Wednesday 15 December 2023

State Cinema, North Hobart

# Senior Company

## *dissolving labels*

*dissolving labels* was a huge time for the cast of 14 young people (aged 13-25) who presented six performances across three days in a performance space of roughly 20 x 20 meters housed in the very gorgeous MAC02. They were incredible at working consistently across the performances, adapting and adjusting across a really tight production week and truly admirable in their support and care for each other both on and off 'stage'.

Members of DRILL’s Senior Company created the work collaboratively with four key creatives: Isabella Stone (dance), Billie Rankin (visual arts and performance), Davina Wright (theatre), and Richie Cyngler (experimental sound). It evolved into a rich, honest, playful, and yet sensitive piece of performance. The young people danced, spoke and sang, through choreography and improvisation, in a performance that expresses some of their lived experiences both literally and reimagined.

The season started with a poignant and magically personal but also embracing Welcome to Country by Nathan Pitchford.  We thank him hugely for being with us that night and in spirit across the season. Inviting Billie Rankin and Davina Wright into the creative team leading the young people felt like a right decision from the moment an invitation was given, and their expertise and care was demonstrated in the work. It was our delight to have folded them into the creative seams of the company. The performers were accompanied by sound and music created and structured by Richie Cyngler. This was Richie’s first commission into making sound and music for a full length live performance, we are grateful for him agreeing to take this creative risk and adventure and producing something truly original for the performers and work.

Support from the TasPorts allowed DRILL to perform the work at the waterfront warehouse MAC02, which created an enormous performance space, surrounded by audience on three sides. Two of the performances were Auslan interpreted with a local interpreter and Audio Described in a collaboration with access2arts (based in South Australia). The show had positive feedback from audiences, a positive review in ArtsHub and 175 students attending at two schools matinees.

**From the Directors:**

‘dissolving labels’ explored young people’s slippery experiences of labels, titles, and names and how they impact their lives - from social categories to the way nouns can shape our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. ‘dissolving labels’ unravels our complicated and often contradictory relationships to labels.

How do we grow in the communities we are born into? How do the communities grow to contain us too? Beyond all the words you hear are hundreds more conversations, private acceptances and movements that are not held within this show.

This show asks you to come with this group of people on a journey through identity, movement and dreams. It’s not a straight line, just like we’re not. It’s an old song sung anew, a story about going to buy a coffee, explorations of grief and growing up. It’s measuring bodies and growing. It asks our audience, what labels would you discard if you could? Which would you hold onto? And how far can any label stretch until it fails its own definition?

The real dissolving labels happens within the community this ensemble has built together. Within DRILL the young people demand no answers of each other and take each other as they are asked to be called. The dissolving therefore becomes a type of radical acceptance of each other. ‘dissolving labels’ holds the grief and difficultly of youth with the joy and humour that young people bring.

**Participants:** 14

**Workshops/Rehearsals/Classes:** 42

**Audience:** 477

**Performances:** 5

MAC 02, Hobart

School Matinee 11am Thursday 18 August

School Matinee 11am Friday 19 August

7pm Thursday 18 August 2022

7pm Friday 19 August 2022

2pm & 7pm Saturday 20 August 2022 (Auslan Interpretatation and Audio Described)

**Directors/Choreographers :** Isabella Stone, Billie Rankin, Davina Wright and all the performers

**Sound design and music:** Richie Cyngler

**Lighting designer:** Chris Jackson

**Lighting operator:** Steph Francis

**Production:** IO Performance

**Producer:** Cathryn Williams

**Videography:** Next Creative

## AYDF

DRILL Artistic Director Isabella Stone and Senior Company Member Curtis Thorpe attended the Australian Youth Dance Festival in Melbourne in July 2022. Curtis attended as a youth ambassador alongside representatives from companies from all over Australia, and secured Arts Tasmania Artsbridge funding to attend. They both took part in workshops, forums and other events over the week.

## Still Drompin

It is unique that this island is home to two of Australia's youth dance companies, both with extensive and long histories of working with young people in creative contexts. While DRILL and Launceston’s Stompin have collaborated before, STILL DROMPIN is the longest exchange the two companies have had - and what a ride it was!

In the October holidays seven Senior DRILL members were accompanied by AD Isabella Stone and GM Cathryn Williams, travelling to Launceston for this 4 day dance camp. There, they collaborated and sang karaoke with, danced alongside, connected to and shared space and time with fourteen members of Stompin.

We began with a grounding and moving ceremony that was shared and led by palawa man Nathan Pitchford, a friend and 'family' member of both the organisations, for which we are extremely grateful. Over the course of the four days the young people experienced workshops with creative leaders from within each of the companies 'families'; Adam Wheeler, Gabriel Comerford, Bec Jones, Riki Mace, Angela Barnard and the two AD's Isabella Stone & Caitlin Comerford. The workshops covered techniques and practices in contemporary technique, choreography, improvisation, contact work, repertoire and site specific performance practices. On top of all this input, the young people had time to work with peers across the companies to create their own new offerings as an output - a way to channel all the musings and learnings over the short and intense time, and a shared moment of joy for the practices they embody and believe in within youth dance.

All this culminated in a public sharing and conversation with community members within Launceston that at times was hilarious, honest, intricate and theatrical. This sharing was hosted by the one and only Trey L'Trash the drag persona of H.K Vermeulen, one of DRILL's 'family' members and creative teachers.

It was a MASSIVE four days of exchange, conversation and reflections of the similarities but important creative differences amongst them all - but that they as a collective of young people can facilitate and host space for all of their differences to be united in their collective strength as a community.

**Participants:** 21

**Workshops/Rehearsals:** 10
**Informal showing: 1**

**Audience:** 20

Assembly 197, Launceston

5-8 October 2022

## *AGE* development

Everyone at DRILL was very excited to work with Elle Evangelista, a Filipino and Burmese female dance artist currently living and working in Gadigal land/Sydney. Elle will be one of the lead creatives for our 2023 major show *AGE* – an investigation what it means to be defined, measured and respected by the length of time you’ve spent on this planet.

DRILL delivered workshops over four days towards seeding ideas for AGE in 2023 and building familiarity for the company with each other and Elle.

Participants: 9

Workshops: 4

Thursday November 10 - Sunday November 13

## Contemporary Classes

Weekly classes are delivered for our Senior Company members, and some members of the public in throughout the year at the Dance Studio at the Kickstart Creative Living Centre. Classes are an essential part of being in Senior Company, and develop the skills of the participants, maintain their fitness, and provide a social connectedness between projects. Classes held during the production period of dissolving labels are included in the statistics for that program. Classes below are those not associated with a particular project.

Classes: 10

Participants: 15

# Junior Company

## Collective Writing - Collective Dancing

Through a swift and focussed creative process, the fourteen young people of Junior Company 2022 have simultaneously produced a book and a performance of individual stories - written, illustrated and embodied. Over a period of seven weeks, meeting for 6.5 hours each week, together with Isabella Stone and Gabrielle Martin, we ambitiously produced creative offerings in both an ephemeral and permanent form.

The stories are wild and varying, occupied with darkness, honesty, friendship, thoughts of the future and many animals. The process was kickstarted with an intensive of three days of both dancing and writing led by DRILL creative team, and story writing workshops and character development with 'Story Leader' Bonnie Que, and Adrianna Bunda a volunteer from our partner organisation - The Story Island Project.

It was awesome to introduce another local creative, Choreographer Gabby Martin, to Junior Company, connecting them to people and emerging leaders in their community. In a hugely generous gesture, one of our Senior Company members, Evelyn Bryan, volunteered to work with the Junior Company. The care and laughter they bought to the studio, while always demonstrating a commitment to hard work and honest creativity, has been gorgeous to watch. Working with Evelyn is an excellent bridge for Junior members considering continuing their journey with DRILL. So, the process was rich in many ways.

Each week we practiced 'the dance of today' an improvisation practice of writing and dancing that is rigorous and has been a wonderful experience to facilitate and observe with our youngest movers.  Entries from the company members are included in the book, unfiltered, handwritten and an honest story expressed and captured from dancing, without judgement. They are beautiful pages between the more constructed stories.

Junior Company members were incredible and their hard work really shone through, in performance and on the page. Libraries Tasmania were an important partner in the work, hosting a workshop for young people from the public, three performances and a book launch at the Hobart Library.

Workshops/Rehearsals: 17

Participants: 15

Audience:100

Performances: 3 + Book Launch

10:30am, 11:30am and 12:30pm Saturday 3rd December. Book Launch 1pm
Hobart Library, Libraries Tasmania, 91 Murray Street Hobart

## Contemporary Classes – ages 9-14.

Artistic Director Isabella Stone delivered classes for young people aged 9-14 throughout the year at the Dance Studio at the Kickstart Creative Living Centre.

For participants in Junior Company, their participation in classes for Term 4 was included as part of their membership of Junior Company.

**Classes delivered over three terms:** 8, 9, 10

**Participants over three terms :** 11, 12, 12

# In-Schools Programs

## Secondary Schools Workshops

Artistic Director Isabella Stone delivered workshops in Secondary Schools in March 2022. Workshops included warm up, and a contemporary phrase and choreographic task from the DRILL 2022 major season, dissolving labels, as well as a brief discussion about the work. Additional workshops were delivered later in 2022.

**Workshops:** 10

**Participants:** 183

## Primary Schools Workshops

In November and December 2022, Isabella Stone delivered workshops in Primary Schools in southern Tasmania. Workshops included a warm up, and some creative tasks, incorporating play and collaboration.

**Workshops:** 37

**Participants:** 197

## Dance Nexus Glenorchy

*Dance Nexus Glenorchy* was led by DRILL teaching artist H.K Vermeulen supported by Isabella Stone and Keia McGrady and engaged 109 students from grades 4 - 7 across the five schools. Over 10 weeks, they collaboratively created new dance performances with young people at Montrose Bay High School, Windemere Primary School, Glenorchy Primary School, Goodwood Primary School and Austin’s Ferry Primary School.

We celebrated their new creations in a public performance for participating students school communities and members of their families at the Montrose Bay High School Performing Arts Centre.

For the first time ever we were able to achieve two days of combined school activities, rehearsals and performance thanks to the incredible support of Montrose Bay High school. It was a massive achievement for the students to adapt - immersed in new environments, working with new people and embracing the expansion of their team growing from their own school unit, to include all their peers from other schools. They did this with great commitment and care.

**Participants:** 109

**Workshops/rehearsals :** 47

**Choreographers** H.K. Vermeulen, Keia McGrady and Isabella Stone

**Participating Schools**:

Montrose Bay High School, Windemere Primary School, Glenorchy Primary School, Goodwood Primary School and Austin’s Ferry Primary School.

**Performances:** 1

Montrose Bay High School Performing Arts Centre.

1:30pm Friday 12 August 2022

**Audience:** 235

# *Acknowledgements*

A CALL TO ARMS was assisted through Arts Tasmania, and developed in partnership with the Bob Brown Foundation.

dissolving labels was assisted through Arts Tasmania, TasPorts and the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund – an Australian Government initiative.

Dance Nexus was assisted through Arts Tasmania, The Allport Bequest, and Rant Arts. This project was made possible by the Australian Government’s Regional Arts Fund, which supports the arts in regional and remote Australia.

STILL DROMPIN was assisted through Arts Tasmania and RANT Arts. This project was made possible by the Australian Government’s Regional Arts Fund, which supports the arts in regional and remote Australia.

AGE development was assisted through Arts Tasmania and the City of Hobart.

Collective Writing - Collective Dancing was assisted through Arts Tasmania, the City of Hobart, and is delivered in partnership with The Story Island Project and Libraries Tasmania.