

Restless Dance Theatre 35th Birthday – Michelle Ryan

Good evening everyone.

Thank you to Her Excellency the Governor and Mr Burton for helping us celebrate this incredible milestone.

Tonight isn't really about 35 years.

It's about people.

The people who had the courage to start Restless,

the people who built it,

the people who believed in it,

The people who lobbied hard to make it happen,

and the people who continue to carry it forward today.

To the founders, Sally Chance and Tania Rose, thank you for creating something that simply didn't exist in Australia.

To the staunch lobbyist who believed in the work and fought hard to build something special for South Australia.

To the artists, staff, teachers, families, board members, who volunteered their time, Thank you

To the donors, supporters, sponsors and funding bodies who have been part of Restless over the years, we send a huge thank you.

Every contribution, large and small, has helped shape who we are today.

The creative visionaries

I would like to acknowledge the artistic leaders who came before me – Rivka Worth, Ingrid Voorendt, Billy Cook and Philip Channells. Thank you to Philip for joining us tonight. With everyone interstate it was a battle with competing schedules to bring everyone together.

These creative leaders built the foundations that continues to support the Restless artists today.

The People at the Helm

The Restless Board, past and present, we thank you for your leadership and belief in the restless mission.

I would particularly like to acknowledge our current Chair, Andrew Mailler, along with our current interstate board members Michael Coonan (Sydney), Susan Thacore (Melbourne), Simone McDonnell (Canberra) and our Adelaidean Board Members, Antionette Tyson, Tara McCloud, Ben Guzman, Caroline Ellison & Chelsea Martin whose support and guidance is shaping Restless into the future.

We also acknowledge the chairs of the past Jayne Boase, Freddie Brincatt, Brownyn Sugars, Caroline Ellison, Nick Linke and And to the many board members who gave their time and expertise to guide the company over many years. Thank you to you all!

To the Restless staff, whose dedication to the day-to-day work ensures this organisation remains strong, sustainable and ready for whatever comes next.

A special mention to Nick Hughes, who devoted more than 20 years to Restless as Company Manager. Nick was instrumental in building the strong organisation we know today, providing steady leadership, sound financial management and tirelessly advocating for Restless. His dedication helped position Restless for the extraordinary future it continues to pursue.

I also want to acknowledge those who have helped shape Restless and are no longer with us, particularly our beloved Creative Producer, Roz Hervey. Roz believed wholeheartedly that disabled artists deserved the same opportunities, recognition and professional careers as any other artist. She was a fearless advocate for artistic excellence, constantly challenging us to create bold, world-class work while never losing sight of the people at its heart. She was deeply passionate about our dancers and dedicated to building a future where they could be paid, valued and celebrated as professional artists. Although Roz is not with us, her vision, creativity and unwavering belief in what Restless could become continue to guide us. We were privileged to work alongside her.

To our current staff team, thank you. Your professionalism, dedication and commitment that enables Restless to shine every day. From supporting our artists and class participants to managing the countless details behind the scenes, your work makes this organisation stronger, more sustainable and ready for the future.

And especially to our current CEO, Julie Moralee. For the last few years, Julie and I have had the privilege of steering this ship together. Through every challenge, every opportunity and every big idea, she has been a trusted partner, a wise leader and a fierce advocate for our artists and organisation. Restless is stronger because of her.

I would also like to acknowledge Larissa McGowan. For many years, Larissa has been an extraordinary force behind the success of our company artists and the artistic excellence of Restless. She leads our professional training program with exceptional skill and care, nurturing the technique, confidence and creative voices of every dancer she works with. As Rehearsal Director, she is the steady hand that brings our productions together, ensuring every performance meets the highest artistic standard. She is the person our artists and families turn to for guidance, reassurance and support, often well beyond the rehearsal room and outside ordinary working hours. Larissa combines remarkable artistic expertise with genuine compassion, creating an environment where our artists can grow, challenge themselves and flourish. She is a master of her craft, an exceptional mentor, and her contribution to Restless is immeasurable.

To our tutors — thank you. You work across our public programs, which are the very foundations of Restless. You are the backbone of this company. We thank you for your generous teaching, and for the ongoing commitment, care and love you bring to every one of the dancers.

Most importantly, thank you to the artists.

You are the reason Restless exists.

You have challenged assumptions, changed perceptions and created extraordinary art. You have shown audiences across Australia and around the world what is possible when talent, creativity and opportunity come together.

For the past 14 years, it has been one of the great privileges of my life to work alongside you. Watching artists grow in confidence, find their voice, build careers and become leaders in their own right is what makes this work so meaningful.

As we celebrate tonight, I am filled with gratitude for everyone who has been part of this journey and excitement for what comes next.

The story of Restless has always been about possibility. It has always been about people. And thanks to all of you, that story continues.

So tonight, let's celebrate the hundreds of people who have contributed to Restless over the last 35 years. This achievement belongs to all of you.

Thank you to everyone for being here tonight, it means a lot to the team to be able to celebrate our history together.

Happy Birthday, Restless. 🎉