

DIRTYFEET

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



DIRTYFEET

In the spirit of reconciliation, DirtyFeet acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We cherish the richness of First Nations Peoples' artistic and cultural expressions. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and those yet to come and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples we work with today.

DirtyFeet works to create a company where the relationship between First Nations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider dance community is based on mutual trust and respect.

Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.



VISION

DirtyFeet cultivates creativity in emerging professional contemporary dance artists with and without disabilities.

OUR MISSION

To support and promote contemporary independent dance by providing inclusive opportunities for emerging dance artists to cultivate their creative potential and develop their practice.

OUR VALUES

Community, Connectivity, Opportunity, Wellbeing.

COMMUNITY

We foster meaningful engagement by embracing and celebrating the diversity of First Nations, people with disabilities, the D/deaf and hard of hearing, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, LGBTQIA+, and the broader dance sector, building a strong and inclusive dance community.

CONNECTIVITY

Our artistic and inclusive dance programming unites the multifaceted identities within the NSW dance community, creating a network of collaboration and shared creativity.

OPPORTUNITY

We provide accessible and inclusive programs for emerging and mid-career dance artists, equipping them with the tools to develop and establish their careers in the arts and cultural sector.

WELLBEING

We prioritise shared reflection through an open-door policy that welcomes dialogue and feedback. By listening attentively and regularly gathering input, we ensure that our programs meet the diverse needs, desires, and differences of our communities, combating segregation and isolation while fostering mental wellness.

FROM THE CHAIR ■■

DirtyFeet continues to be a vital force in Sydney's dance landscape, creating a space where emerging artists can thrive, experiment, and innovate. In 2024, our programs - The Right Foot, Emerging Makers, Choreographic Lab, and Out of the Studio - provided invaluable opportunities for diverse dance artists to connect, create, and grow. Guided by our commitment to access, inclusion, and diversity, 2024 saw us foster environments where all participants are valued and respected. We are proud to champion the perspectives of our broader community, including First Nations peoples, dance artists with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse artists, people of colour, and LGBTQIA+ individuals.

As a board, we recognise our unique role in supporting these artists, offering essential resources including space, funding, dancers, mentors, and artist support workers. DirtyFeet serves as an essential bridge, empowering dance artists on their journey towards professional development.

Our ongoing dedication to the dance community is driven by the vision and expertise of DirtyFeet's founder, Anthea Doropolous, and Director of Artistic Operations and Inclusive Practices, Sarah-Vyne Vassallo. Their passion and leadership ensure that DirtyFeet remains a consistent and inclusive space for artistic growth. We also extend our deepest gratitude to our partners, supporters, donors, and funders—with special thanks to CreateNSW. Our work is made possible through the generosity and belief of many, and we sincerely appreciate every contribution.

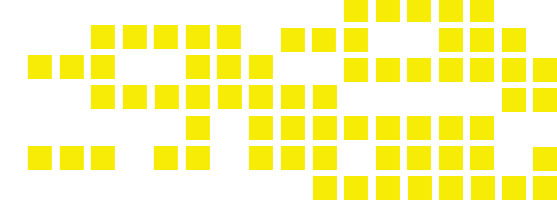
As we move forward, our mission remains clear: to champion contemporary independent dance by providing inclusive opportunities for emerging artists to explore, refine, and develop their creative practice.



Margaret Khursigara
Chairperson



DIRECTOR'S REPORT ■



As we close the chapter on 2024, I reflect with deep pride and gratitude on what has been a truly transformative year for DirtyFeet. From celebrating major milestones to nurturing the next generation of artists, our commitment to inclusive, artist-led contemporary dance has never felt more vital or more visible.

This year marked the 10th anniversary of our flagship program, Out of the Studio. We honoured this milestone with bold, thought-provoking new works and an unforgettable opening night that brought together community, industry, and supporters in celebration of the program's lasting impact on Australia's dance landscape.

Across all five program streams, inclusivity remained at the centre of everything we did. DirtyFeet supported emerging artists through residencies, choreographic labs, workshops, mentorships, and professional development programs each designed

to foster collaboration, experimentation, and professional growth. We proudly commissioned dance writer Sharlini Williams to respond to Out of the Studio 2024, and I was honoured to author a 10-year retrospective for Dance Australia in print and online, further amplifying the stories and voices shaping our community.

As I reflect on 2024 we have remained steadfast in our mission: to champion inclusive contemporary dance, to amplify underrepresented voices, and to support artists at every stage of their creative journey.

To our incredible artists, supporters, partners, board members, and wider community, thank you. Your belief in what we do makes everything possible. Here's to the next chapter.

Anthea Doropoulos
Director



KPIs

Connect professional dancers to the community

- 58 Live Events
- 48 Inclusive Dance Opportunities
- 298 Audience Engagement
- 4462 Digital Reach

Increase artist and participant engagement

- 48 Workshops
- 96 Workshop Participants
- 6 Performances

Invest in dance artists

- 4 Creative Developments
- 122 Artists
- 17 Arts Workers
- 16 Workshop Facilitators
- 25 Artist Support
- 39 young emerging artists
- 8 First Nation Artists
- 21 Artists with Disabilities
- 13 Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Artists
- 6 Mentors



The Right Foot ■

The Right Foot once again ignited joy and deep connection, welcoming dancers with disabilities into a space where creativity and movement came alive through shared storytelling.

In May 2024, DirtyFeet proudly delivered The Right Foot community workshops to 34 participants across a vibrant three-day program. Led by professional artists with disability, Chris Bunton and Bonnie Curtis, the inclusive dance workshops provided a nurturing environment for participants to express themselves through movement, explore the art of storytelling, and develop their own unique creative voices.

With support from long-standing partner City of Sydney, who generously provided Glebe Town Hall as our venue, the program promoted self-confidence, collaboration, and friendship. Drawing inspiration from the moral themes of fairy tales and folklore, participants explored concepts such as breaking free from societal expectations, the tension between conformity and independence, and living life on one's own terms. Through this lens, the group developed abstract physical sequences that transformed these ideas into powerful collective expression.

The workshop series culminated in an intimate performance sharing, where participants presented their creative explorations to an audience of 28 family members, friends, and community supporters. The sharing celebrated personal achievement, artistic courage, and the beauty of inclusivity in dance.

Co-facilitators: Bonnie Curtis and Chris Bunton

Trainee Facilitator: Ashleigh Khule

Intern: Tijana Sammut

Artist Support: Zoe Morgan, Tanya Velselic, Natalie Pelarek, Amy Flannery

Mentor: Sarah-Vyne Vassallo

Secondees: Maddison Fraser and Tom Evans

Venue Partner: The City of Sydney



Choreographic Lab ■

DirtyFeet was proud to reignite its Choreographic Lab in 2024, supporting a new generation of dance makers through dedicated space, time, and mentorship. This year's Lab was led by choreographer Cassidy McDermott Smith, a dancer, educator, and performance artist working on Gadigal Country.

Over a two-week residency at Walsh Bay, Cassidy developed a new work-in-progress titled Pull Me Closer, an evocative investigation into humanity's paradoxical relationship with progress and environmental decline. Collaborating with a team of emerging artists, Cassidy explored the intersections between dance and astrophysics. The work delved into physiology, habitual movement pathways, and unconscious technical tools, inviting both scientific curiosity and creative experimentation.

Collaborating with Cassidy, DirtyFeet welcomed four emerging dancers and two secondees into the creative process, supporting a total of eight emerging artists over the course of the residency and further expanding the DirtyFeeters cohort. Esteemed choreographer Sue Healey offered guidance and insight as a mentor throughout the residency.

The Lab culminated in an informal sharing attended by 45 audience members, including peers, friends, funding partners, and members of the local dance community. The showing offered a glimpse into the team's research and discoveries, and celebrated the bold ideas and collaborative spirit that define DirtyFeet's commitment to artistic development.

Choreographer: Cassidy McDermott Smith

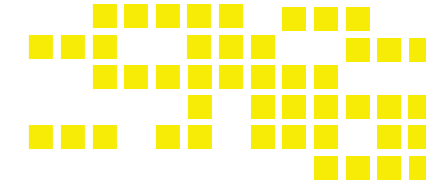
Dancers: Remy Rochester, Strickland Young, Allie Graham, Madeline Backen

Mentor: Sue Healey

Secondees: Tom Evans and Maddison Fraser

Venue Partner: The City of Sydney





The 2024 Emerging Makers program marked another milestone in DirtyFeet's commitment to supporting the next generation of dance makers with and without disability. Delivered as a three-day masterclass series in August, the program provided 10 emerging artists with a high-quality, inclusive platform for creative exploration and choreographic development.

Building on the momentum and discoveries of 2023, the 2024 series deepened its focus on choreographic processes including experimentation, movement scores, and devised theatre methods. These tools supported artists in strengthening their storytelling skills and expanding their creative practices, all within a safe and supportive environment designed by and for artists with disability.

Led by Sarah-Vyne Vassallo, the program offered a nuanced combination of professional guidance and peer collaboration. Sarah-Vyne deconstructed her own choreographic methods to support the emerging makers in discovering and refining their artistic voices. The program was further elevated by a mentoring session with acclaimed disabled artist Dan Daw, whose in-person contribution on day one created a strong foundation for the week and was a highlight for many participants.

The series culminated in a studio sharing at the PACT Centre for Emerging Artists, a long-standing and like-minded partner of DirtyFeet. PACT's commitment to emerging artists and its accessible venue in Erskineville provided the perfect creative home for this deeply collaborative and inclusive program. The final sharing was attended by an engaged audience of 45, including peers, mentors, industry allies, and community members. Reaffirming the importance of creating space for emerging voices to be seen and celebrated.

Lead Artist: Sarah-Vyne Vassallo

Mentor: Dan Saw

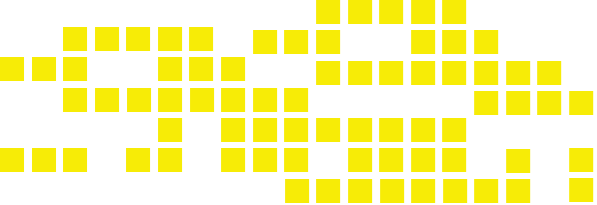
Emerging Makers: Jonathan Yung, Chloe Morrison-Greet, Oliver House, Michael Wigan, Emily Scerri-Rikkert, Zakaria Ghomri, Amy Flannery, Emma Riches, Vishnu Arunasalam

Artist Support: Zoe Morgan, Azzam Mohamed, Suzy Dunne and Em Yali

Interns: Alyce Phou Pyi Sone, Hannah Mettenbrink, Rita Ohdate

Secondee: Tom Evans

Venue Partner: PACT Centre for Emerging Artists





2014

Sarah-Vyne Vassallo

Out of the Studio ■

Celebrating 10 Years of Out of the Studio

In 2024, DirtyFeet proudly celebrated 10 years of 'Out of the Studio' a program that has become a cornerstone of Sydney's dance community and a launchpad for countless emerging choreographers.

First launched in 2014 at Shopfront Arts Co-op, the program was launched from humble beginnings, homemade brownies, and big dreams. Over the past decade, it has grown into one of Australia's most respected platforms for early-career dance makers.

Across ten successful years, the program has supported 76 artists, many of whom have gone on to create and present work with leading arts organisations such as Sydney Dance Company, Bangarra, Campbelltown Arts Centre, FORM Dance Projects, Arts House, and the Keir Awards, Melbourne Arts House, Sydney Opera House, Bangarra, Australian Dance Theatre, Sydney Festival, Dancehouse, TasDance, Arts Gallery of NSW, The Joan

Sutherland Performing Arts Centre, Dance Makers Collective, FORM Dance Projects, Blacktown Arts Centre, PACT Centre for Emerging Artists, Karul Projects and FLING Physical Theatre. These success stories are a testament to the program's impact and DirtyFeet's unwavering commitment to artist development, access, and inclusivity.

To honour this milestone, 'Out of the Studio' was featured in a special article in Dance Australia magazine, penned by DirtyFeet's own Sarah-Vyne Vassallo, Director of Artistic Operations and Inclusive Practice. The feature reflects on the humble beginnings, the remarkable growth, and the deeply human connections at the heart of the program.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to investing in the next generation of choreographers, expanding our partnerships, and creating more opportunities for experimentation, mentorship, and artistic growth.



2014

Rob McCredie



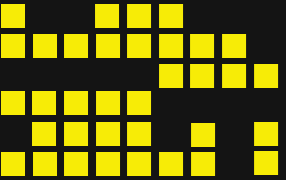
2015

Rhiannon Newton



2015

Rosslyn Wyth



2016

Brianna Kell



2018

Lucky Lartey



2018

Sarah Black



2016

Ivey Wawn



“This program has touched many lives and forged countless careers. It exemplifies what DirtyFeet stands for: nurturing artists, fostering relationships, building a vibrant, supportive, and inclusive dance community.”

Sarah-Vyne Vassallo

2019

Emma Harrison



2017

Thomas E.S.Kelly



2017

Matt Cornell



2019

Callum Mooney



2020

Emily Flannery



2020

Eliza Cooper



2022

Tra Mi Dinh



2022

Gabriel Green Olea



2023

Azzam Mohamed
Sarah-Vyne Vassallo
Martin del Amo



Out of the Studio ■ 2024

In September 2024, the Out of The Studio program once again provided a space for experimentation, risk-taking, and storytelling, spotlighting the early stages of new dance works by three exceptional artists: **Amy Flannery, Vishnu Arunasalam,** and **Emma Riches.**

Held at the Sydney Dance Company Studios in the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct, Out of the Studio 2024 offered audiences a glimpse into the raw, first-draft nature of contemporary dance making, brimming with potential and artistic inquiry.

Mentorship from esteemed artists **Martin del Amo, Ella Havelka, and Rhiannon Newton**

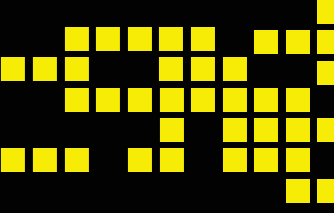
provided invaluable insight and support throughout the creative journey. Out Of The Studio provides a paid opportunity, studio space, mentorship, production support, marketing, and documentation as part of its holistic approach to artist development.

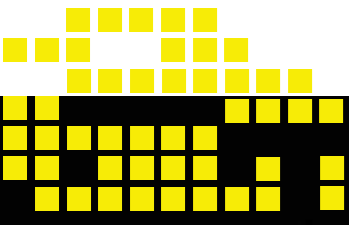
DirtyFeet presented three performances, including a relaxed matinee, to an engaged audience of 180. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the artists, collaborators, and audience members who contributed to making Out of the Studio 2024 a rich celebration of the future of contemporary dance.

Amy Flannery **Sap(ped)**

Performed by **Aroha Pehi** and **Maddison Fraser**, drew inspiration from the natural process of tree sap, both its beauty and its discomforts. The work explored hidden internal pathways, healing through disruption, and broader ecological concerns, reflecting on the implications of ongoing deforestation.

Venue Partners: Sydney Dance Company Studios, Dance Makers Collective, ReadyMade Works and FORM Dance Projects.





Vishnu Arunasalam Mugavari

(Tamil for “identity”), a solo work, offered a personal and poignant reflection on his experience as a Tamil Sri Lankan Australian and end-of-life nurse. Blending Bharathanatyam, movement, and spoken word, the work offered a tender and complex meditation on cultural identity, care, and personal truth.

Emma Riches Cue Lab

Featuring dancers **Emma Harrison, Mitchell Christie, Jacinta Mullen,** and **Josh Freedman**, operated as a living, breathing framework. Part social experiment, part performance, the piece invited audiences to witness an investigative process. With spontaneity, responsiveness, and listening at its core, ensuring no two performances were ever the same.



Studio Artes Classes

In 2024, DirtyFeet proudly continued its partnership with **Studio Artes**, delivering inclusive contemporary dance classes for adults with disabilities. This ongoing program remained a cornerstone of our commitment to accessibility in the arts, creating space for new and returning participants to explore movement in a supportive and creative environment.

Under the expert guidance of DirtyFeet facilitator **Gabriela Green Olea**, the

program welcomed 60 enthusiastic participants across the year. Their consistent engagement and passion exemplified the transformative power of inclusive dance.

A heartfelt thank you to **Gabriela Green Olea, Rita El-Ghossein, Hayley Manu, Rowan Yeomans, Bob Deacon, Bernie Ryan** and **Chris Nehme** and the entire team at Studio Artes for their dedication and energy throughout another successful year.



Board of Directors

Margaret Khursigara – Chairperson

Andrew Bass – Director of Legal

Emily Dash – Director of Arts and Disability

Bronwyn Cooksley – Director of Marketing and Business Development

Michael Doropoulos – Director of Finance

Jessica Gibson – Director

John Henderson – Director

Tra Mi Dinh – Artist Representative

DirtyFeet Staff

Anthea Doropoulos - Director and Co-Founder

Sarah-Vyne Vassallo - Director of Artistic Operations and Inclusive Practice

Zoe Morgan - Choreographic Lab Program Manager

Thank You

Thank you to our principal partners Create NSW, City of Sydney, Moble, Raskos, and Byrons.

Thank you to our venue partners: PACT Centre for Emerging Artists, FORM Dance Projects, ReadyMade Works, City of Sydney and Sydney Dance Company

Thank you to our raffle donors:

Young Henrys, Egg of the Universe, White Rabbit Gallery, ARTEST, Bangarra, Sydney Dance Company, Bell Shakespeare, Fontana, Taronga Zoo, Linda Tahija Jewellery, Chocolate Artisan Jessica Pedemont, Leif, Dirt Shop, Flour Drum, Buds and Bowers, A total of 28 prizes were awarded, with a combined value of \$4,000.

Photo credits by: Hayley Rose Photography, Nat Cartney, Yvonne Chen, Kate Disher-Quill, Lucy Parakhina and Teniola Komolafe

DIRTYFEET

DirtyFeet Ltd

ABN: 96 127 242 579

Registered Charity

TCC and DGR Status

www.dirtyfeet.com.au

