

YDF26 Mentors' Biographies

Faith Ajaye

Faith Ajaye is an accomplished performer and passionate teacher with over 20 years of dance experience and 8 years of teaching. Starting dance at just four years old, Faith has grown into a versatile artist with a strong passion for commercial dance. She has performed with internationally recognised artists including Snoop Dogg at the AFL Grand Final and Cascada, as well as appearing in music videos, television commercials and major campaigns. Faith has also performed across Australia and the United States, bringing valuable real-world industry experience into every class. Specialising in hip hop, commercial and jazz funk.

Faith's classes are fun, energetic and performance-focused, helping dancers build strong technique, confidence and stage presence. Known for her positive and encouraging teaching style, she creates a supportive environment where dancers of all ages and abilities can learn, grow and develop their own unique style while enjoying their love of dance.

This is Faith's 1st year as YDF Mentor, and she is very excited to join the team and support all students' creations.

Debora Di Centa

Debora Di Centa is a Canberra-based Italo-Australian independent dance artist, educator and cultural leader with extensive experience across ballet, modern and contemporary dance, contact improvisation, physical theatre and Choreological Studies/Laban Movement Analysis.

A graduate of Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in London, Debora has developed a wide-ranging artistic practice shaped by collaborations, research programs and performances across the UK, Europe, Asia, Australia and the United States.

Her work spans teaching, performance, choreography and the direction of dance events for professional artists, community participants and young people. She regularly collaborates with visual artists, musicians, dance companies, schools, universities and arts organisations, bringing a thoughtful and inclusive approach to each creative context.

Since 2019, Debora has worked with Ausdance ACT as Project Manager, Youth Dance Festival Mentors Leader and Schools Coordinator. The Youth Dance Festival continues to hold a special place in her artistic and professional life, offering an ongoing opportunity to learn, grow and support the creativity and artistic education of young dancers across the ACT.

Sugar Kaye Grefaldeo

Sugar is a dynamic and multi-talented figure in the Filipino Australian and global dance communities, known for her contributions as a performer, choreographer, dance educator, and community organizer.

Originally from the Philippines, Sugar's journey in dance began in her homeland where she was influenced and trained by the Filipino Hip Hop community. She gained significant recognition when she represented the Philippines in the World Supremacy Battlegrounds in 2017, where her team won a silver medal, and placed in the Top 4 at Domination 2018.

In Australia, Sugar has carved out a unique space for herself in the dance scene and continues to evolve as a versatile artist, learning from renowned teachers such as Yasim Coronado Veranes at Paradox Dance Studios. Here, she explores and hones her skills in lyrical & contemporary dance, afro, dancehall, and street Latin styles.

In addition to her performance work, Sugar is a key member of the Filipino Australian community. She is one of the founding members of Hiraya Performing Artist - Brisbane, a collective that promotes Filipino indigenous and cultural dance through workshops, community events, and performances. Sugar's cultural work is deeply rooted in her heritage and aims to educate and inspire the next generation of dancers and artists. Through her work, Sugar has become a key figure in dance and bridging cultural divides through her artistry and leadership in the Filipino Australian community.

Over the past two years, the Youth Dance Festival has been an inspiring experience, offering the opportunity to witness young people express themselves through dance with passion, courage and creativity.

Patricia Hayes Cavanagh

Starting dance at 4 years old, Pat has been performing and creating for most of their life. At 15, she began to explore the world of improvisation, choreography, and artistic practice. Since finishing full-time study at Sydney Dance Company's Pre-Professional Year in 2020, Pat has pursued their creative interests through teaching, dancing, and arts engagement across multiple disciplines and age ranges.

A Party Artist for Australian Dance Party since 2021, Pat has performed in many site-specific and multi-disciplinary works that have won awards (LESS, 2022) and have toured regional NSW (Escape from Plastika, 2024).

Pat has also taught and worked with QL2 Dance since 2021, choreographing for two Chaos shows (Big Little Things, 2022, Yummy! 2023) and working as a rehearsal assistant for QL2's senior project, being Assistant to the Artistic Director in 2024's Subject To Change, Ruth Osborne OAM's final major project with QL2.

Pat is interested in using dance as a tool for exploring ideas connected to people, nature, and what it means to exist and move through the world.

"This is my fourth year being a mentor for YDF, and I am continuously excited and inspired to see how the students come together and create. Dance is a powerful tool for learning, and I

have been so lucky to see so many wonderful works come out of YDF. Having the opportunity to go out into these schools is so special.”

Mia Rashid

Mia Rashid is a ballet and contemporary dancer based in Canberra, Australia. She attended Newtown High School of the Performing Arts and continued her dance education at the Queensland Ballet Academy, Classical Ballet 121 Sydney, Joffrey School of Dance Chicago and recently, ADDA Barcelona.

She has worked with Chicago's Meadows Dance Collective, Las Peinetas Spanish Dance company in Sydney, partaken in a two month long artistic residency with Blivande House in Stockholm and recently performed as Anna II in Operantic's production of Seven Deadly Sins in Sydney.

As well as pursuing dance, Mia has just completed a double bachelor's degree in development studies and Anthropology at the Australian National University. Passionate about the power of movement, Mia aims to connect with audiences through her artistry.

This is Mia's 2nd year as YDF Mentor, and she is very excited to reconnect with all students and teachers and see what they will bring on stage at the 2026 edition.

Tanele Storm Graham

Affectionately known as Miss T, Tanele has been working in Performing Arts education for over 20 years, working with schools, studios, production companies, artists and theatres both in Australia and internationally.

Miss T began her journey in dance 30 years ago, accumulating a diverse range of skills and technical proficiency from an early age through institutions such as Brent Street Studios, Paradise Performers Academy, The Arts Centre GC and many others across QLD and NSW. With a strong background in ballet, jazz, tap, voice, acting and commercial styles, T then went on to study in the Bachelor of Arts Musical Theatre course at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. Some of T's mentors and teachers include Matthew Lee Robinson, Shannon Atkins, Mira Jerome, Heidi Jennings, Robert Young, Julia Moody and Crispin Taylor.

T has performed professionally in many musicals and productions internationally. She has featured as a vocalist in numerous events and has toured her own solo cabaret. A few of her personal favourites are Ellen in *Miss Saigon*, Bombalurina in *Cats*, Heather Chandler in *Heathers*, Gabriella in *High School Musical*, as well as working with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Moulin Concert Show, HOTA, various cruise lines and entertainment companies. Working in theatre allowed her to gain vital production management and directorial skills, which have led to T's role as a creative director for large-scale productions, music videos, photoshoots, cabarets and dance performances.

Whilst enjoying performing, Miss T found a true passion for education and went on to conduct studies in Psychological Science at Macquarie University, Special Education at the University of New England, Early Education specialising in Performing Arts at Curtin University, and other short courses and workshops. After teaching for over 20 years, in 2025 T partnered with another accomplished educator, Lauren Rutherford, to create Dynasty Studios, a performing arts school in Canberra that values a high standard of technical education balanced with strong community values designed to support both physical and mental development. The studio develops students into confident, kind and proficient performers, trained by specialist educators.

T is thrilled to be working with Ausdance ACT to share her knowledge of Jazz, Musical Theatre and production with students around Canberra.

Thank you

Ausdance ACT