



KAREN NANASCA, INAUGURAL 14+ DANCE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT, 2004



KATHERINE SONNEKUS WITH ELVIRA MACRAE, 2014

BY DEIRDRE TARRANT

# TEN YEARS BACK — TEN YEARS FORWARD

## 14+ Dance Scholarship Foundation

In this article Deirdre Tarrant looks at the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) New Zealand’s biennial 14+ Dance Scholarship Awards which take place this year on 4 September. Still teaching and passionate as ever about the value of dance, Deirdre has a long association with the RAD that spans over 30 years as an International Examiner and teacher.

The Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) is one of the most prestigious organisations in the world with a long history of commitment to the training of young dancers and dance teachers. For almost 63 years, the RAD awarded Overseas Bursaries for full-time study in dance. Recipients have included Rowena Jackson, Alexander Grant CBE, Kerry Anne Gilberd, Mary Jane O’Reilly and Sheryllyn Kennedy. In 2003 a decision was made in London to withdraw the funding for this Bursary and in real Kiwi fashion there was a rallying here in NZ to find a way to ensure that this tradition was continued!

When Peter Morpeth, Shirley Baker and Deirdre Tarrant first discussed how on-going funding would work and came up with a structure that needed 14 donors of \$2,500 over 10 years, little did they think their idea would grow to be such an amazing way to help dancers to further their studies.

The 14+ Dance Scholarship Foundation was incorporated in 2004 to establish, fund and maintain scholarship programmes, thereby promoting professional development, knowledge, understanding and practice of dance by dancers and teachers of classical ballet in NZ. The original aim was to have 14 New Zealanders pledge support for ten years to ensure ongoing funding and make this scholarship a truly NZ initiative. However, support from dance enthusiasts from all over the country exceeded the original proposal with 25 Founder Members of the Foundation committing to the programme, hence the name 14+Dance Scholarship Foundation.

The inaugural scholarship was given in honour of one of our most illustrious dance pioneers, Jeane Horne. She developed and nurtured the links and organisation that established the Royal Academy of Dance in NZ and was very well known in Wellington, not only as an excellent teacher, but also for her work in the theatre and with the fledging New Zealand Ballet Company. Much that she did involved opening doors and creating chances for young dancers to travel, study and perform. At the invitation of Dame Margot Fonteyn, she became the first New Zealander to serve on the Academy’s Grand Council. It was very appropriate that the first 14+ Dance Scholarship acknowledged our dance heritage and such an important and pivotal personality in the history of NZ dance and particularly ballet.

Over the first ten years, the Creina Gee Memorial Award and the Alexander Grant Training Award were added and, in 2014, a new award was donated by Tauranga dance aficionado Elvira Macrae.

These four awards form the backbone of the 14+ Dance Scholarship Foundation's biennial awards. The candidates dance in a class and perform variations with all dancers showing the same vocabulary of sequences. There are two judges from the professional ballet industry and entries have been strong and growing year by year.

The awards provide a great opportunity for young talent to take the stage and to join together in the pursuit of financial assistance to help them further their training. Many past recipients have gone on to forge successful careers in dance and secure contracts with some of the world's top ballet companies.

Karen Nanasca and James Wynn, both past winners of the 14+ Dance Scholarship, are now dancing with the Australian Ballet and National Ballet of Canada respectively. Past recipients of the Alexander Grant Training Award have included Rhiannon Fairless, also currently with the National Ballet of Canada, Yayoi Matches now with the Queensland Ballet and Ariana Hond with Melbourne City Ballet.

The Creina Gee Memorial Award has a focus on dance teacher training and past recipients have included Nadine Proctor (Gisborne), Julia Barry (Auckland), Angie Longman (Christchurch) and Hannah Ross (Wellington), all now established teachers of classical ballet.

Katherine Sonnekus, who was the inaugural winner of the Elvira Macrae Award in 2014, is studying at the American Ballet Theatre Jacqueline Onassis School in New York.

These are just a few of the dancers who have benefitted from the contribution made by the wonderful donors to the 14+ Dance Scholarship Foundation. These are great dancing footsteps to be following as the Foundation looks forward to another ten years of nurturing and supporting young ballerinas in Aotearoa. ■

14+ Scholarship Awards - 4 September 2016,  
Te Whaea, the National Dance and Drama Centre,  
Wellington



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