

PRESS KIT

DANCE ACADEMY

PARLIAMENTARY RECEPTION AND SCREENING

MONDAY 27 MARCH AT 6.00PM

HOSTED BY

SENATOR THE HON MITCH FIFIELD

MINISTER FOR THE ARTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

AND

JANET HOLMES À COURT AC

CHAIRMAN, AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS

JOANNA WERNER (Producer, Werner Film Productions)

SAMANTHA STRAUSS (Writer)

JEFFREY WALKER (Director)

RSVP to filmsrsvp@arts.gov.au by Monday 20 March 2017

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION

The Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF) is a non-profit public company limited by guarantee.

The Commonwealth Government is the ACTF's major supporter, through the Ministry of the Arts. The ACTF is also supported by the governments of all State and Territories.

The ACTF is a national children's media and production and policy hub, and performs a wide range of functions in children's media: as a voice in policy matters; as a distributor of and investor in Australian children's television series; as an instigator of new, innovative and entertaining children's media and as a developer of valuable screen resources for the education sector.

The ACTF works with independent producers from all over Australia, providing script development investment, domestic and international distribution, mentorship and advice. Our focus is on culturally distinctive, original content that would not be made without our support.

SCREEN AUSTRALIA

Screen Australia is a Commonwealth Government agency charged with supporting Australian screen development, production and promotion.

Screen Australia funds the production of everything from features to documentaries, television drama, children's programs and online web series. Screen Australia aims to help businesses within our home-grown screen industry by supporting their growth. In doing so, more Australians will be able to see more of their multi-faceted country and unique Australian perspectives on the world reflected in their stories on screen.

THE DANCE ACADEMY PHENOMENON

Dance Academy is one of Australia's most successful children's television series.

Joanna Werner (producer) and Samantha Strauss (writer) developed the concept for the series whilst they were working together on a series for Jonathan M Shiff Productions. In 2008 Joanna launched Werner Film Productions to make the series a reality. She approached the ACTF for support at the same time and the ACTF came on board with script development investment, Executive Producer services and office space. The ABC, ZDF and ZDF Enterprises and Screen Australia all backed the series which went into production in 2009. Since going to air in 2010 (and expanding to three series, or 65 episodes over the next few years) Dance Academy has won numerous national and international awards. What's more remarkable is how deeply audiences love it. It's sold into more than 160 countries around the world, screens regularly on the ABC and is on Netflix in the United States.

By the end of series 3, the characters had all grown up and graduated from the National Academy of Dance. The cast had moved on and were making their mark on television and in film (in Australia and the United States), on stage and in the music industry. Werner Film Productions had received Enterprise Funding from Screen Australia and was developing an exciting slate of new children's and adult projects. But somehow, for everyone who loved Dance Academy – from the creative team, to the investors and not least its millions of fans around the world – the series remained super special and making the leap to the big screen to see what became of these beloved characters as they forged their careers, just seemed like the right thing to do. Hence, the movie, Dance Academy.

DANCE ACADEMY

Directed by Jeffrey Walker

Written by Samantha Strauss

Produced by Joanna Werner

Starring Xenia Goodwin, Alicia Banit, Dena Kaplan, Jordan Rodrigues,
Keiynan Lonsdale, Thomas Lacey, Tara Morice and Miranda Otto

Release date: 6 April 2017

Rating: TBC

Running Time: 90 minutes

For more information contact Bryony McLachlan at

Werner Film Productions:

+61 3 9200 5500 or email: bryony@wernerfilmproductions.com.au

SYNOPSIS

SMALL

Tara Webster was destined to become one of the top dancers of her generation before a devastating injury crippled her career. In her quest to defy the odds, and make her comeback, Tara will discover what being defined by a dream really means.

MEDIUM

Former ballet student, Tara Webster, was destined to become one of the top dancers of her generation before a devastating injury crippled her career. Over the last eighteen months she has tried to embrace life as a university student but cannot get over her dream of dancing professionally. In her quest to defy the odds in a near impossible comeback, Tara leaves her life and love behind in Sydney and travels to New York. But as the rejections pile up, and Tara tears herself apart trying to fit the unrelenting ballet mould, she must learn to find, and trust, her own voice before she loses everything that truly matters in the pursuit of a dream.

LARGE

Dance Academy: The Movie continues the story of global phenomenon, *Dance Academy*.

Former ballet student, Tara Webster, was destined to become one of the top dancers of her generation before a devastating injury crippled her career. Over the last eighteen months she has tried to move on and embrace life as a university student but cannot get over her dream of dancing professionally. Haunted by her past, by the night she was injured, Tara embarks on a near impossible comeback, leaving her life and love behind in Sydney, determined to prove to the ballet world (not to mention herself) she still has what it takes.

As the rejections pile up, and Tara tears herself apart trying to fit the unrelenting ballet mould, she must start to find, and trust, her own voice before she loses everything that truly matters. This journey will take Tara far from home, reuniting with her Academy friends, ex-loves and former enemies, all still chasing their dreams after graduation in their own ways. But from New York to Texas and then finally onto the world stage, it's only when Tara finally achieves everything she ever wanted she discovers where she truly belongs – somewhere she never would've expected.

SYNOPSIS

ONE PAGE

Growing up on a farm outside the tiny town of Patchewolling, Tara Webster spent her childhood dancing barefoot in sheep paddocks with a fairy tale dream of becoming a ballerina. At fifteen, when she was accepted into the National Academy of Dance, the top ballet school in the country, Tara couldn't help feeling like her life was about to begin. She arrived in Sydney the undisputed underdog and three tumultuous years later emerged with the potential to be one of the great dancers of her generation—her contract with the National Ballet Company a certainty, her future written in the stars. However on the night Tara auditioned for a contract, she slipped on stage, broke a vertebrae in her back, impacting her spinal cord. In this one moment Tara's entire life changed forever.

Eighteenth months later, Tara is back on her feet. After several surgeries and months of physiotherapy, her back has mostly healed and her new focus is fitting into life as a university student. But even there her plan of becoming a novelist isn't turning out to be as viable as she secretly hoped. Tara spends time with her long term boyfriend Christian, a teacher at a local drop-in dance centre, and works as an usher at the Opera House, watching her former rival and current housemate, Abigail, perform with the National Ballet Company.

Tara's trying valiantly to make the most of the cards she's been dealt, but while she loves Christian, she's haunted by the past and who she used to be. Tara badly misses her best friend Kat who has just landed a starring role on a hit television series that's filming in New York. She also misses Ben, her friend and former boyfriend, who's the newest rising star of the Austin Ballet. Tara feels like her former classmates have all made proper lives for themselves after graduation while she's still floundering.

It definitely doesn't help she's in the middle of a lawsuit, suing the National Ballet for negligence that resulted in her injury. Tara knows that legally claiming she's been robbed of a professional ballet career means she is effectively giving up any chance of making a comeback, and when it is crunch time, she's just not prepared to say she can never dance again. Company auditions are four months away and, even though everyone around her thinks it's an impossible mission (that makes Christian sick with worry) Tara trains harder than she ever has in her life. The basis of her Academy-trained technique is still in her muscles and, in her heart, she's holding onto the hope offered by Madeline, Artistic Director of the Company, who seems to see a unique potential in her.

When audition day arrives, Tara's prepared technically but not emotionally and is devastated when Madeline refuses to progress her to the next round. Betrayed yet again by the ballet world, Tara is offered a life-raft by Kat: a trip to New York. Kat intends it as a holiday but Tara is burning with the need to prove to the Company (and to the world, and to herself) she is still a contender.

New York is the city of dreams and Tara is going to fight as hard as she possibly can to make hers come true and find a position with a dance company. But as the rejections pile up, and she tears herself apart to fit the unrelenting ballet mould, Tara's forced to finally question what truly matters most. In a journey that takes her from Sydney to New York to Texas and then onto the world stage, Tara discovers a side of herself she never knew existed: her voice, the stories *she* wants to tell. It's only when Tara finally achieves everything she ever wanted she discovers where she truly belongs – somewhere she never would've expected.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

TARA WEBSTER

Tara Webster was destined to become one of the top ballet dancers of her generation before a devastating injury crippled her career. After several surgeries and months of physiotherapy, Tara is trying to make the most of the cards she's been dealt by concentrating on fitting into life as a college student. But her dream of ballet continues to haunt her. Tara's no longer the naïve girl from the sheep farm. She knows there's virtually no chance she'll be able to make up for lost time and be accepted into the National Ballet Company. It would require a comeback of crazy, epic proportions. And yet that's exactly what she's determined to do.

KAT KARAMAKOV

Effervescent, irreverent and programmed to see the fun side, Kat has been best friends with Tara ever since they first arrived at the National Academy of Dance. After years of railing against the discipline of the ballet world, Kat was relieved to finally hang up her pointe shoes and focus on her new goal of becoming an actor. She moved to New York assuming she'd be starting at the bottom and can't believe her luck now she's landed a starring role in a new break-out tween series: Belle. Kat's determined to enjoy her D-List (possibly approaching C-List) celebrity status, living it up as only Kat can.

ABIGAIL ARMSTRONG

Abigail has been dancing since birth and has always pushed herself to work harder than anyone with a brutal determination even her enemies had to respect. Deep down, Abigail never truly believed it was possible she'd make it into the National Ballet Company because of the limitations of her body type and was stunned in her final interview when she was offered a contract. Eighteen months on, Abigail has proven herself a reliable member of the corps de ballet but has her sights firmly set on defying yet more odds and being promoted to soloist. As Tara's flatmate and friend/former nemesis, Abigail takes it personally when Tara decides to try to make a comeback and Abigail's insecurities rise to the surface when it looks like Tara might just succeed.

CHRISTIAN REED

Dancing comes easily to Christian but as a boy who grew up in a housing commission, he's never fit into the privileged world of professional ballet. Christian's much more connected to hip hop and much more interested in what dance can give to the world rather than any ambition to be the best. At the end of Third Year, Christian was offered a contract with the National Ballet Company but turned it down in order to run a drop-in dance centre for disadvantaged kids. Now fully immersed in something he's passionate about, Christian's finally able to let go of the demons of his past. He's no longer the brooding bad boy, which has definitely helped his on-again/off-again relationship with Tara find equilibrium.

BEN TICKLE

Benjamin Tickle has a heart as big as the Sydney Harbour and doesn't like to dwell too much on the dark side. For a long time he kept it a secret that he'd spent his childhood in and out of hospital with leukemia. He didn't want his classmates to see him as a sick person but that early lack of control over his body is always going to be one of his big drivers to succeed. Ben seemed a natural fit for the Company and was gutted when he didn't receive a contract. Grasping for alternatives, Ben took an opportunity to audition for an overseas company. He was accepted into the Austin Ballet and has quickly shot up the ranks. He's now the company's brightest rising star and already performing the principal roles he was born to dance.

OLLIE LLOYD

Ollie has many talents but humility isn't one of them. A freakishly versatile dancer, he also sings and writes songs. Ollie was accepted into the Company on the basis he keep his ego in check.

In the following year Ollie was lured from the Company by the glamour of a singing career in London. When it fell through – “artistic differences” – he found himself on the audition circuit. He's now doing the rounds in New York and, through waves of rejection, starting to see what humbled truly means.

LUCINDA RAINE

Headmistress of the Academy, Miss Raine's bar is set high. Committed to awakening a tolerable technique and discipline in her students, her methods are often viewed as uneven. Despite this, Miss Raine is respected for pushing her students to give their all in pursuit of careers as professional dancers.

Now rediscovering love has changed her. Choosing not to stay at the Academy but to follow guest teacher Marcus Kane to the Austin Ballet in Texas, she's finding out how great it can be to follow her own path.

XAVIER MICHAELS

Xavier was the kind of American kid who once described himself as 'adorkable' like he couldn't help it, who grew up to become a minor TV celebrity and four quadrant slasher (actor/singer/DJ/social impact impactor). Xavier's finally cracked it now he's landed a starring role opposite Kat in their break-out teen series, Belle. Xavier is a dude-bro with a lot of feelings. In love with Kat—when he can see past his own depth—Xavier speaks his truth to anyone around him, even when the truth hurts.

MADELINE MONCUR

Madeline has everything to prove as the new Artistic Director of the National Ballet Company. Driving an unorthodox modern edge, her polarizing ballet for the Ballet Company's tour to the New York Ballet Festival “Cognitive Dissonance” means the difference between a major coup and staggering loss on a global stage.

Asked to testify that Tara was never talented enough to be offered a contract by the Company, Madeline inspires a new world of hope in Tara when she asks her to re-audition for the upcoming tour.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

XENIA GOODWIN

Xenia is well known for her role as Tara Webster in the highly successful children's series, 'Dance Academy' on the ABC. Xenia will be making her feature film debut reprising her role as Tara in the much anticipated feature, 'Dance Academy: The Movie'.

Always having had an interest in the Arts, Xenia began formal dance training at age 9, at the Valerie Jenkins Academy of Ballet in Sydney. She was actively involved in Drama at school, performing in many productions and directing the Year 9 drama performance in 2008.

Achieving honours in all her Cecchetti Ballet examinations, and winning numerous state scholarships, Xenia was accepted into the full time dance program at the Tanya Pearson Classical Coaching Academy in Sydney in 2009.

Her love of acting, dancing, music and theatrical performance has been a driving force for her and as a result her starring role in 'Dance Academy'.

Xenia has also appeared in the Seven Network's 'Winter', Movie Extra comedy series, 'The Jesters', Beth Armstrong's short film, 'You Cut, I Choose', and the Australian Theatre for Young People production of 'House on Fire'.

ALICIA BANIT

Alicia is perhaps best known to audiences as the vivacious and witty Kat on ABC3's hit teen series 'Dance Academy', however she first shot to public attention as one of Ja'mie's friends in Chris Lilley's hugely successful 'Summer Heights High' for ABC TV. She then went on to film four series of Disney Australia's 'As the Bell Rings' in a role which showcased her comedic skills beautifully.

Alicia has worked professionally since a very young age, making her feature film debut as a young Miranda Otto in 'The Dead Letter Office.' Early TV credits include 'Halifax f.p', 'Rove Live', 'In Melbourne Tonight' and a recurring role in 'Neighbours'. Other TV credits include the recurring role of Leah in the critically acclaimed series 'Tangle' for Southern Star/Showcase and a lead guest in 'Rush' for the Ten Network. Alicia will soon be seen in the feature film 'We Were Tomorrow' and in TV series 'Upper Middle Bogan' and 'Trip for Biscuits', both for the ABC. Alicia has just reprised the role of Kat for the forthcoming feature 'Dance Academy: The Movie'.

DENA KAPLAN

Dena's film work includes 'Honey 3' and the forthcoming 'Dance Academy: The Movie'. Her main cast TV debut came with the hugely successful teen show 'Dance Academy' for ABC TV. Other TV screen credits include NBC US series 'Camp', 'Tricky Business', the miniseries 'Mrs Biggs', 'Soul Mates II', 'Scooter: Secret Agent', 'City Homicide', 'The Dr Blake Mysteries' and a lead guest in 'Flight of the Conchords' for HBO.

Dena comes from a long line of performers and is one of three sisters all working professionally in the entertainment industry. At only 16 years of age, she joined the adult ensemble of 'The Lion King' for their Melbourne, Sydney and Shanghai seasons, working alongside younger sister Ariel. Other stage credits include 'Don Quixote' (Australian Ballet) and Louise in 'Carousel' (The Production Company).

Dena has studied at the renowned Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre in New York and was an associate of the Australian Ballet School. She is an acclaimed singer and DJ, performing regularly. She toured Australia with the band Rufus and performed at the Coachella Music Festival. She has recently released the single 'Wait for You'.

JORDAN RODRIGUES

Jordan recently wrapped shooting a lead role opposite Saoirse Ronan in the Greta Gerwig directed feature 'Lady Bird'. He will next be seen in the 'Dance Academy' feature film – based on the hugely successful Australian TV series that airs worldwide. Jordan reprised his role of Christian Reed.

Earlier this year he did an arc on the MTV comedy series 'Faking It' and starred as the lead in the feature 'Breaking Through' for writer/director John Swetnam ('Step Up: All In') and executive producer John Legend. He currently recurs on the Freeform series 'The Fosters' and recently starred in the high profile mini-series 'A Better Man' for Freemantle/SBS Network based on the true story of two brothers who were caught trafficking heroin from Singapore to Australia. Jordan's credits include the NBC summer series 'Camp' and the hit Australian series 'Dance Academy' and 'Home and Away'.

KEYYNAN LONSDALE

Keiynan Lonsdale has quickly become "one to watch" this year, landing some of the hottest projects in film and television and even making his way into the music industry. In film, Keiynan made his US feature debut in 2015 starring as Uriah, a fellow "divergent" in 'Insurgent' [Lionsgate], the highly anticipated sequel in the 'Divergent' trilogy. He was seen reprising that role in 'Allegiant: Part 1' opposite Shailene Woodley and Theo James in March 2016.

Keiynan was also recently seen in 'The Finest Hours' [Walt Disney Pictures] as Eldon Hanan. He appears opposite Chris Pine, Eric Bana, Ben Foster, and Casey Affleck. On the television front, Keiynan recently joined the cast of the hit CW series 'The Flash' as Wally West, the iconic speedster from the DC Comics universe who made his debut as Kid Flash. 'The Flash' aired its season two finale on May 24, 2016.

Keiynan grew up in St. Mary's, Australia, about an hour west of Sydney. Upon graduation from a performing arts high school Keiynan was cast as ensemble and the understudy for Tyrone in 'Fame The Musical', a role he played for 10 months.

Keiynan went on to star in 25 episodes of the award-winning, Australian television series 'Dance Academy' from 2012-13. He originally was cast with a guest star role, but by season three was made a series regular. Between seasons two and three of the show Keiynan also built a strong relationship with MTV, quickly becoming the face of MTV Australia and New Zealand. For two years he hosted MTV News, attended and hosted various festivals for the network, starred in commercials, and interviewed artists such as Miguel, Jessie J, and Disclosure, to name a few. Working in scripted television while also working behind the scenes and in front of the camera at MTV was the perfect bootcamp for Lonsdale, who was about to land one of his biggest projects to date: 'Insurgent'.

Aside from his work in film and television, Lonsdale loves to write and record his own music, and recently released his single 'HIGHER', which has been streamed over 300,000 times on SoundCloud.

THOMAS LACEY

Thomas was recently seen treading the boards as Scott Hastings in Baz Luhrmann's 'Strictly Ballroom the Musical', a leading role that showcased him as an extraordinary triple threat. He has also just toured as featured vocalist with Hugh Jackman in 'Broadway to Oz' and travelled to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival to perform with 'The Tap Pack'.

Thomas amassed a large fan base from his role as Ben Tickle in the ABC's hit teen series 'Dance Academy'. This was his first ongoing television role, and his natural charm and presence saw him soon become a favourite with audiences. Thomas commenced professional work on stage in 'The Magic Faraway Tree' for Garry Ginivan Productions. Other credits include 'Singin' in the Rain' and the Melbourne and Singapore seasons of 'Oliver!', 'The Wizard of Oz' (GFO/SEL) and several appearances with The Production Company including 'Music Man', 'Bye Bye Birdie' and 'Oklahoma!'

A career highlight was performing in the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony. Having commenced dancing at the age of 2 at the May Downs School of Dance, Thomas trained in Ballet, Jazz, Tap, Hip Hop, Contemporary Dance and Acrobatics. He also trained at Danceworx in Ballroom, Latin and New Vogue and has undertaken further voice work at the David Butler Studios alongside acting classes with some of Melbourne's top drama coaches. Other screen work includes 'Blue Heelers' and a recurring role in 'Winners and Losers'. Thomas will soon be seen in the feature film 'Dance Academy: The Movie'.

NIC WESTAWAY

Nic is best known for his role as Kyle in the Seven Network's 'Home and Away' and will next be seen in Jeffrey Walker's feature film, 'Dance Academy: The Movie' as well as 'We Were Tomorrow'. He has also starred in Lauren Evans' short film 'Driven', and 'Happy Haven', directed by Jeff Asselin.

Nic graduated from Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) in 2011. Whilst at WAAPA, he performed on stage in several productions including Chris Edmund's 'Anna Karenina'.

TARA MORICE

A graduate of the National Institute of Dramatic Art, Tara has worked extensively in theatre, film and television. Her first film out of NIDA was Baz Luhrmann's 'Strictly Ballroom' for which she was nominated for a British Academy of Film and Television Award (BAFTA) an Australian Film Institute Award (AFI) and a Film Critics Circle award, winning the Variety Club Heart Award for Best Actress. She was named Ansett Australian Star of the Year at the 1995 Gold Coast Film Awards. Other film roles include 'Oranges and Sunshine', 'Miracle Fish', 'Razzle Dazzle', 'Candy', 'Moulin Rouge', 'Hildegard', 'Square One', 'Hotel Sorrento' and 'Metalskin'.

Her television credits include the award winning 'Dance Academy (Series 1, 2 & 3)', 'Answered by Fire', 'McLeod's Daughter', 'Salem's Lot', 'After the Deluge', 'Loot', 'Grass Roots', 'My Husband My Killer', 'Dogwoman', 'A Difficult Woman', 'Water Rats' and as a presenter on 'Playschool'. Most recently she appeared in 'Winter' for the Seven Network. Tara has performed for the Sydney Theatre Company, Belvoir, Bell Shakespeare, Griffin Theatre Company and The Ensemble, nominated for a Victorian Green Room award for 'The Venetian Twins' and a Helpmann Award for 'Fat Swan'.

Tara wrote, produced and directed the documentary 'My Biggest Fan' for SBS in 2008. She also recorded 'Time After Time' for the 'Strictly Ballroom' soundtrack and again for Baz Luhrmann's album 'Something for Everybody'.

MIRANDA OTTO

Miranda Otto gave an electrifying, season-long performance this past year as Allison Carr, the Berlin Chief of Station working directly under Saul Berenson (Patinkin), in the fifth season of Showtime and Fox 21's Emmy Award-winning series 'Homeland'. It has just been announced that she will reunite with 'Homeland' producer Howard Gordon on '24: Legacy', starring opposite Corey Hawkins in the Fox series, which begins shooting this spring.

Miranda stars opposite Geoffrey Rush and Sam Neil in writer/director Simon Stone's 'The Daughter', shot on location in Australia. The film premiered at the 2015 Venice Film Festival. In 2014, Miranda starred opposite Greg Kinnear in Fox Television's drama series 'Rake', and with writer/director/actor Tommy Lee Jones in the period drama 'The Homesman'. In 2013, she played Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Elizabeth Bishop in Brazilian director Bruno Barreto's tragic love story 'Reaching for the Moon'.

Australian-born Miranda made her first major film appearance in 1986, starring in the title role in Clytie Jessop's 'Emma's War'. After a decade of critically acclaimed roles in Australian films, including Gillian Armstrong's 'The Last Days of Chez Nous', 'Doing Time with Patsy Cline', 'Love Serenade' and 'The Well', (the latter two having played in competition at the Cannes Film Festival), Miranda caught Hollywood's attention. In early roles, she played opposite George Clooney and Sean Penn in 'The Thin Red Line' and opposite Harrison Ford and Michelle Pfeiffer in 'What Lies Beneath'.

In 1999, she was cast as Éowyn in Peter Jackson's international blockbuster 'The Lord of the Rings' film trilogy, winning a Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture for 'The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King'. She co-starred with Tom Cruise in Steven Spielberg's 'The War of the Worlds', and was in director John Moore's 'Flight of the Phoenix'.

Miranda's first forays into American television include starring roles on 'Cashmere Mafia', and the miniseries 'The Starter Wife' opposite Debra Messing and Judy Davis. In 2005, she won Australia's prestigious TV Week Silver Logie Award for "Most Outstanding Actress in a Drama Series," for her performance as Lindy Chamberlain in the television miniseries 'Through My Eyes'.

Miranda has worked extensively in theatre, including a memorable role in the Sydney Theatre Company's 'Boy Gets Girl'. Her performance as Nora in that company's production of Ibsen's 'A Doll's House' won her the 2003 Mo Award for "Female Actor in Play of the Year."

Originally from Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, Miranda is the daughter of Australian actor Barry Otto and former actress Lindsay Otto. Deferring an original plan to study medicine, she began a career in acting and never looked back. She graduated from Australia's National Institute of Dramatic Art, whose alumni include Judy Davis and Mel Gibson, and she currently resides in Los Angeles with her husband, actor Peter O'Brien, and their daughter.

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

COSTUME DESIGNER – TESS SCHOFIELD

Tess is a costume designer who works across film, television, opera and theatre. Tess has won five AFI (now AACTA) Awards for Best Costume Design in a Feature Film and been nominated for, and won, Green Room, Helpmann and Sydney Theatre Critics Awards for her costume design in opera and theatre.

Tess recently designed costumes for the BBC/Foxtel television co-production 'The Kettering Incident' starring Elizabeth Debicki and Matt Le Nevez. Previously she completed costumes on 'The Water Diviner', the feature film directorial debut of Russell Crowe, which won her most recent AACTA award. She has just wrapped as costume designer for 'Dance Academy: The Movie', a feature film set to premier in 2017.

Tess designed the costumes for 'The Sapphires' which had its world premiere at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival and had a wide international theatrical release in 2013. Tess won an AACTA for Best Costume Design for her work on the film.

Tess won AFI's for Best Costume Design for her work in the feature films 'Spotswood', 'Dirty Deeds' and 'Bootmen' and she received a nomination for 'Mr Reliable'. Tess costume designed feature films 'Cosi', 'Radiance', 'Diana and Me', 'Subterano' and 'Greenkeeping'. Tess designed the costumes for Gillian Armstrong's feature documentary 'Unfolding Florence'.

Theatre work includes 'A Streetcar Named Desire' and 'The Diary of a Madman' both of which travelled to BAM in New York. Tess has worked extensively at Belvoir and Sydney Theatre Company in Sydney.

Tess' opera costume design includes: 'La Traviata' staged on Sydney Harbour by Opera Australia; 'Sweeney Todd' for the Lyric Opera Chicago and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and 'Peter Grimes' for Opera Australia and Houston Grand Opera. Tess' musical theatre credits include 'Shane Warne The Musical', 'Spring Awakening' and 'Chess'.

PRODUCTION DESIGNER – CHRIS KENNEDY

Chris Kennedy is an internationally renowned, award winning Production Designer with extensive experience across film, television and commercial campaigns.

His feature credits include the John Hillcoat directed features 'Lawless', 'The Road' and 'The Proposition' for which he won his fourth AFI Award for Best Production Design. Chris was nominated for a Satellite Award for Best Art Direction and Production Design for The Road and enjoyed critical acclaim worldwide for his outstanding work. In 2014 he completed Russell Crowe's directional debut feature film, 'The Water Diviner' for which he received another AFI/AACTA nomination for Best Production Design.

Television credits include the 'Jack Irish' and 'Curtin' telemovies for the ABC, the latter winning the 2006 Silver Logie for Most Outstanding Drama, Miniseries.

Chris has won four AFI Best Production Design Awards and in 2005 his great commitment to cinematic vision was recognised when he received the AFI/AACTA Byron Kennedy Award for Outstanding Creative Enterprise.

In 2015 Chris completed production for the features 'Lion' based on Saroo Brierley's book, 'A Long Way Home'. The film is directed by Garth Davis for See-Saw Films. Chris recently finished shooting 'Dance Academy: The Movie' and is developing work with John Hillcoat and Lucy McLaren.

MUSIC – DAVID HIRSCHFELDER

David Hirschfelder was raised in the country township of Ballarat, about 110 kilometres northwest of Melbourne Australia. After graduating from Ballarat Grammar School in 1976, he continued his music education at The University of Melbourne. Making waves as a young keyboard prodigy in the late 70s, David formed the legendary improvising art-music ensemble Pyramid, and was inevitably called abroad to perform his compositions at the 1983 Montreux Jazz Festival.

From the mid-80s to early-90s, David became the musical brain behind many of Australia's landmark concert events and recordings, including John Farnham's 1988 'Classic Jack' Tour, featuring the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and Harry M. Miller's record-breaking 'Jesus Christ Superstar' Arena Spectacular in 1992. Also in that same year, David's first film-score for Baz Luhrmann's 'Strictly Ballroom' won a BAFTA (British Academy) award. In 1996 David received an Oscar nomination, an AFI and an APRA award for his 'Shine' score; and in 1998 a further Oscar nomination, as well as BAFTA and APRA awards for 'Elizabeth'.

David's recent film-scores include Jonathan Teplitzky's 'The Railway Man', which won AACTA and APRA film score awards in 2014; Russell Crowe's 'The Water Diviner', which was nominated for an AACTA in 2014, won the 2014 FCCA Regal Cinema Award for Best Music Score, and also APRA Soundtrack of the Year Award in November 2015. And in December 2015, David received an AACTA nomination for his eclectic score to Jocelyn Moorhouse's 'The Dressmaker', starring Kate Winslet, Judy Davis and Hugo Weaving.

Hirschfelder is now recognised globally as one of Australia's most distinguished screen-composers. Other works include 'Eternity' for orchestra, choir and 1000 tap-dancers (commissioned for the Opening Ceremony of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games), 'Mixed Doubles' for string quartet (commissioned for the 2004 Adelaide Arts Festival), 'Branches of Vayu' for trombone, two pianos and percussion (commissioned for the 2011 MSO Chamber Series), and 'To a Child' for soprano and string quartet, part of a song-cycle set to 10 poems by Judith Wright, recorded and released in 2016 by Katie Noonan and The Brodsky Quartet

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY – MARTIN MCGRATH

Martin McGrath's career took off when he shot Jocelyn Moorhouse's Proof and the hugely successful 'Muriel's Wedding' two years later. He was nominated for Best Achievement in Cinematography AFI for his work on both 'Children of the Revolution' and 'Blackrock' and won an AFI for 'Passion' starring Judy Davis and Richard Roxburgh.

His other film credits include: 'The Sound of One Hand Clapping'; 'A Little Bit of Soul'; 'Swimming Upstream' (ACS Award); 'Footy Legends' with Claudia Karvan; and 'Irresistible' starring Susan Sarandon and Emily Blunt. Martin shot Second Unit on a number of US productions filmed in Australia including: 'Peter Pan'; 'Son of Mask' and 'Star Wars III Revenge of the Sith'. His most recent feature films are: 'Around the Block' directed by Sarah Spillane and starring Christina Ricci, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2013; and 'UNindian', an Australian/Indian co-production directed by Anupam Sharma.

Martin's television credits include the locally produced 'Packed to the Rafters' for the Seven Network; 'Dance Academy' Series 1, 2 and 3 for ABC3; 'My Place' for the ABC; TV1 real crime drama series, 'Killing Time'; the ABC court room drama 'Rake', and telemovies 'Jack Irish' and 'The Broken Shore' with Essential Media; 'Blue Murder'; 'Blackjack'; 'Valentines Day' and the Golden Globe nominated 'On the Beach'. Martin also shot the docudramas 'The Last Confession of Alexander Pearce' and 'The Extraordinary Tale of William Buckley' for the ABC.

Martin won two ACS Awards and the 2015 AACTA Award for Best Cinematography in Television for 'The Broken Shore' for Essential Media and the ABC. Most recently, he shot the 'Dance Academy' movie for Werner Film Productions; the kung-fu comedy series 'Maximum Choppage' for Matchbox Pictures and ABC2; Australian/UK co-production 'Banished' for See Saw Films, RSJ Films and BBC2; and the ABC3 children's series 'Ready For This' for Blackfella Films and Werner Film Productions.

EDITOR – GEOFF LAMB

Geoff is a renowned Australian editor with an extensive body of work. His feature film credits include 'Early Winter', 'Return to Nim's Island', 'The Turning – Immunity' and 'The Children of the Silk Road'. Geoff has edited the 'Jack Irish' telemovies, 'Underbelly – Movie Files – Infiltration' and 'Scorched' among others.

Geoff's television series work includes 'Mako Mermaids Series 2 & 3', 'Secrets and Lies', 'Reef Doctors', 'Dance Academy Series 1 & 2', 'Lighting Point', 'The Elephant Princess Series 2', 'H2O – Just Add Water Series 1 & 3' and 'East of Everything'.

Geoff recently completed the feature films 'Ali's Wedding' and 'Dance Academy: The Movie', both directed by Jeffrey Walker.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER – LOUISE SMITH

Louise has been working in the production of television commercials and feature films for almost twenty years. She has gained an international reputation for her collaborations with stellar directing talents including Nash and Joel Edgerton, Ben Chessell, renowned actor Rachel Griffiths, commercials director Derin Seale and acclaimed writer Samantha Strauss.

Her work has screened at festivals such as SXSW, Sydney International Film Festival (In Competition), Telluride, Sundance, Aspen and Berlin and has been awarded honours by the Toronto Short Film Festival, Palm Springs and Puchon. In 2002 she co-produced with Marian Macgowan the feature film 'The Rage in Placid Lake' starring Ben Lee, Rose Byrne, Garry McDonald and Miranda Richardson. Written and directed by Tony McNamara, the film won the Australia Film Institute Award for Best Adapted Screenplay.

In 2008, she produced the feature film 'The Square', directed by Nash Edgerton and written by Joel Edgerton & Matthew Dabner which was nominated for 7 Australian Film Institute Awards and was released internationally in a number of countries including France, the USA, Germany, Spain, Italy and Greece.

Louise is an Executive Producer on 'Dance Academy: The Movie' feature film, currently in post-production.

PRODUCER AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER – JOANNA WERNER

Joanna Werner is a three time Emmy Nominated, AFI, AACTA and multi Logie award winning producer.

Joanna is the Executive Producer, Producer and Co-Creator of the acclaimed teen drama series 'Dance Academy' which was the first production for her company Werner Film Productions. 'Dance Academy' first screened in 2010 in Australia on ABC3 and has gone on to be a global success screening in over 160 countries around the world. The series has won many awards in Australia and around the world and in 2011 and 2014 the series was recognised with nominations at the International Emmy Awards in the category of Children's and Youth.

In 2015 Joanna was the Executive Producer, Producer and Co-Creator on the teen series 'Ready For This', a co-venture between Werner Film Productions and Blackfella Films. The series has won a Logie, an AACTA, Silver World Medal at the New York Festival's International Television & Film Awards, an Australian Writer's Guild Award, a Director's Guild Award and has recently been nominated for an International Emmy.

Joanna recently produced 'Secret City', a 6 x 1 hour political thriller for Foxtel and Matchbox in Association with Werner Film Productions and is currently in post-production on 'Dance Academy: The Movie' – the feature film following on from the 'Dance Academy' series to be released in cinemas on April 6 2017.

Previously Joanna produced the hit tween series 'H2O- Just Add Water' and 'The Elephant Princess' for Jonathan M Shiff Productions.

Joanna established Werner Film Productions in 2008 and the company was recently nominated for Australian Production Business of the Year.

WRITER – SAMANTHA STRAUSS

Samantha is a writer for television and film. She co-created the hit Australian teen drama series 'Dance Academy' which screens in over 160 countries. It has been nominated for two International Emmys and won the Most Outstanding Children's Series Logie awards in 2012 and 2013.

Samantha was head writer across the 65 episodes, writing 25 episodes and script editing and storylining the others. Samantha has been individually nominated for six Australian Writer's Guild Awards and won three times. She's been nominated for two NSW Premier's Literary Awards in 2011 and 2014.

In 2015 Samantha wrote AWGIE winning 'Mary: The Making of a Princess', a biopic telemovie produced by Fremantle Media which was the highest rating drama on Network Ten in over a year. In the past she has worked as a freelance scriptwriter on drama series including 'Wonderland' and 'Offspring' (also for Network Ten), storyliner for 'Wentworth Season 4' (Foxtel), 'Monkey' (a new family series for the ABC and Netflix). She has also been commissioned to develop both drama and comedy series for the Nine Network, Foxtel and the ABC. Sam is currently script producing 'The Wrong Girl Season 2' for Playmaker Media and Network Ten.

As a feature film writer, Samantha has written 'Dance Academy: The Movie' filmed in Sydney and New York, directed by Jeffrey Walker and produced by Werner Film Productions. She has also been commissioned to write 'Sheila', produced by Revolver and Goalpost Pictures, based on the bestselling book by Robert Wainwright.

Samantha is currently developing several comedy drama series, including 'The End' for See-Saw Films and Foxtel, as well as 'Dirty Thirties' for Werner Film Productions. She's also developing 'Pretenders', a new 26-part children's drama series for the ABC, and a family film called 'The Summer We Ruled The World', developed with Screen Australia, both for Werner Film Productions,

DIRECTOR – JEFFREY WALKER

Jeffrey started his career as an actor in the Australian film industry at the age of seven. He was a lead in many different series, totalling more than 200 episodes. In 1997, Jeffrey won the Australian Film Institute's Best Young Actor Award for his title role in 'The Wayne Manifesto'.

Making short films on weekends and acting during the week, teenaged Jeffrey garnered the attention of prolific television producer Jonathan M. Schiff, who offered him the opportunity to train under him as a producer and director. Having completed school, Jeffrey commenced his training, and shortly after became one of Australia's youngest ever television directors at twenty years old.

For over a decade, Jeffrey helmed major Australian television productions shown domestically and around the world. Chris Lilley's 'Angry Boys' for HBO, 'Rake', 'H2O: Just Add Water', the Emmy nominated 'Dance Academy' and the prestigious 'Jack Irish' TV movies starring Guy Pearce. 'Jack Irish' won Jeffrey the Australian Academy award for Best Direction in Television - the youngest ever recipient. He has been nominated for this award a further three times. As well as this, he has won four Australian Directors Guild awards in the past five years, and received a further three nominations for his various comedic and dramatic works.

Jeffrey began directing in the US in 2012 and has directed episodes across eleven series. These include 'Modern Family', 'Bones' and the critically acclaimed, 'Difficult People', where he directed the entire series, and Executive Produced alongside Amy Poehler. Season three films in 2017. In 2014, Jeffrey directed the prestigious BBC mini-series, 'Banished', written by multi-BAFTA and Emmy winner, Jimmy McGovern - released internationally in 2015. Jeffrey received nominations for the finale episode of the series in both the Australian Academy awards and the Australian Directors Guild awards. His debut feature film, 'Ali's Wedding' will release in 2017 and has had its festival world premiere where it received critical praise and a standing ovation. 'Dance Academy: The Movie' marks Jeffrey's second film and will release on April 6, 2017. Both films were made con-currently between 2015/16.

Jeffrey has directed over ninety hours of television, two feature films and is thirty-four years old.