

WORDS & IMAGES DANIELLE BROWN



Life As a Creator



Having traversed the realms of Jane Beckett's dance education, my journey offers a distinctive lens into her profound influence. In my late teens, financial constraints halted aspirations of further full-time dance training, yet the yearning persisted. Jane's classes at Bodenwieser Dance Centre became my refuge - a demanding fusion of Jazz, Contemporary, and Ballet. Now, three decades later, as an observer in Jane's class, her syllabus remains a timeless source of inspiration.

with

BECKETT

Jane

The Beckett Syllabus: An Evolution in Dance Education

Evolution of the Syllabus:

Jane's journey into Jazz dance was serendipitous, transitioning from life as a classical ballet company artist into a Jazz commercial dancer. Ronne Arnold's classes in Melbourne marked a pivotal moment in her training as his classes offered an introduction structure akin to a ballet class but with transformative nuances and challenges that combined an American jazz style dance with contemporary dance themes. Ronne's classes were technically and mentally demanding but always full of joy, musicality, passion, and love.

**Special thanks...
to the students at The
McDonald College for graciously
allowing me to be present
throughout their lessons in Term 4.
Watching you work was truly
inspirational. Your dedication to
your craft and determination of
focus are superb.**





The Unique Barre Experience:

Ronne Arnold's original barre work, a cornerstone of Jane's syllabus, has over the years been adapted and transformed into a 50-minute odyssey, testing stamina, enhancing focus, and preparing dancers for centre work. Jane's measured instructions set the tone, requiring students' unwavering attention. The barre, a continuous flow of movements, becomes a meditative journey, fostering physical and mental discipline. The syllabus organically grew, adapting to different genres, eventually becoming a remarkable blend of technique, endurance, and artistic expression. Jane was also extremely fortunate to have another mentor in Paul Saliba, who very generously shared his encyclopaedic knowledge of contemporary dance movement when they worked together at NAISDA in the late 1980's, with this collaboration extending on and off for the next thirty years.

Inspiration and Modifications:

Jane's syllabus constantly evolves, driven by a desire to push boundaries. Modifications, inspired by myriad influences, cater to individual needs and even align with upcoming auditions. Her love for isolations, cultivated from diverse influences, enriches students' kinetic awareness, especially in contemporary dance.



Educational Philosophy and Impact:

As an educator, Jane aims to instill confidence, technical proficiency, and a love for storytelling. Her holistic approach addresses physical and emotional aspects, emphasizing the importance of internalizing techniques akin to navigating a vast landscape.

Collaborative Essence at
McDonald College:

The McDonald College stands as a sanctuary for enthusiasts of the performing arts, where collaboration thrives among diverse streams. Vibrant concerts and choreographic evenings serve as platforms, unveiling the harmonious synergy between music, dance, drama, and musical theatre. Jane Beckett, in her role at the college, fosters an environment where every student can blossom at their own pace.



Legacy of Perseverance and Passion:

Jane's journey, evolving from performer to educator, is a testament to the perpetual learning embedded in the art of dance. Her legacy transcends the confines of the syllabus, transcending into the realm of empowerment. Jane instils in her students the ability to navigate their distinctive dance landscapes with unwavering confidence, boundless creativity, and an enduring passion.

Jane's Present Influence:

In the current landscape, Jane Beckett imparts her wealth of wisdom to the budding dance artists at The McDonald College. This educational haven provides aspiring performers with a comprehensive program, allowing them to immerse themselves in the multifaceted world of performing arts. Jane's expertise breathes vitality into the dance curriculum, sculpting the next generation of artistic talents.

In essence, Jane Beckett's influence at The McDonald College is not merely instructional; it is a symphony of collaborative artistic endeavours and a legacy that resonates in the hearts and movements of those fortunate enough to be guided by her.

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In retrospect, I truly grasped the profound gift that Jane bestowed upon me during my youth. She epitomised uniqueness, breaking away from the prevailing 70s jazz style that dominated dance schools at the time. Instead, she drew inspiration from what we witnessed on 'Rage'—capturing the mesmerizing isolation reminiscent of MJ's 'Thriller.' It was like perceiving my body through a new lens, a transformative tool for my artistic journey.

One vivid memory is the collaborative effort on Prince's 'Sign of the Times.' Jane skilfully interpreted Prince's poignant lyrics, 'In France, a skinny man died from a big disease with a little name.' We toiled on the routine on the creaking floorboards of an upstairs studio in Goulburn Street (Chinatown). I was astounded by what her gentle yet potent influence enabled me to achieve.

Years later, Jane and I became colleagues at The McDonald College, working side by side. I've witnessed her brilliance not just as a tutor but, more significantly, as a choreographer and artist. Her work is nothing short of ingenious and illusionary.

You can unmistakably recognize it when you witness it, feeling the resounding 'yes' within.

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Joshua Consandine

former Principal Artist The Australian Ballet
former artist with Sydney Dance Company
Master Dance Educator

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Jane choreographed a contemporary solo for me in my full-time year, which I completed with Christine Keith when she was at Brent St Studios. Jane created a beautiful, wistful solo to Erik Satie's meditative *Gymnopédie*, in which I wore a short white smock dress and my short curly hair was out - if I remember well, the solo was called 'Impish', which was very fitting. When I hear that music I still start to dance the steps in my head, and remember how hardcore Jane's coaching was. She asked me to repeat it over and over - the solo, despite its gentle nature, was a marathon, so this was no mean feat! But I'd never felt stronger and more 'inside' any of my eisteddfod solos before that. I'd love to dig it up on VHS to watch again.

Adam Linder and I were Chris' full-time students that year, and alongside our hours with her we also did contemporary and jazz classes with Jane and the Brent St performing arts full-time students. I was in love with Jane's jazz barre especially! And will never forget her fiery passion - she has such a soft demeanor and voice, but in the studio - wow! She could scream, in the best way!

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Juliet Burnett

Former artist with The Australian Ballet
Former artist with Opera Ballet Vlaanderen
Freelance Artist

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Jane was my guiding light in the world of dance and beyond. In the rhythm of my memories, she stands tall—a beacon of grace, talent, passion, joy, and unwavering support. I find myself constantly reverting to the principles of her teachings and the lessons she imparted so generously. Jane helped me turn my fears and doubts into achievable dreams. Her 'tough love' ways were so appreciated and refreshing as she cultivated not just dancers but artists who learned to believe in themselves and express themselves through the language of dance. I am deeply grateful for her patience, humor, wisdom, and vision. Jane saw potential where we (as students) saw obstacles. She guided us through intricate routines and life's complexities alike. Her belief in our abilities ignited a fire within us, a fire that continues to burn brightly even today.

I have fond memories of my body singing (and aching) after countless repetitions of technique drills, my mind marinating in bliss on the odd occasion she would guide us through a visualization exercise. I remember the elation I felt when she spontaneously broke out into isolations. Beyond the countless pirouettes and pliés, Jane instilled values that transcend the confines of the studio. She taught us that success is not merely about flawless performances but about the diligence and passion we invest in our craft. She taught us to never give up. ”

Elisha Young

KAI Yoga - Founder

We reached out to several of Jane's former students, a group comprised of accomplished elite artists, to share their personal insights on the invaluable experiences gained during their time in class with Jane.

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Jane Beckett's barre is one of the most meticulously designed set of exercises that I have danced. It combines aspects of musicality, stretching and strengthening. From my memory it was a continuous and seamless 30 minute block that we would almost "perform" at the start of every class before centre work. It was a full body work out that had a similar structure to a classical barre but with much more of a contemporary twist. The iconic barre work was fantastic for developing young dancers as many of her students have gone to become professional dancers such as myself.

I still use some of her exercises today as a warm up before a show.

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Hugo Dumapit

The Australian Ballet
Corps de Ballet

“

Jane's choreography changed my life. She's a legit genius!

”

Aaron Cash

Actor, Singer,
Dancer, Choreographer
Original Tap Dogs
Cher's lead dancer for 10 years
Co-creator, co-choreographer of
Ballet Revolucion