

# DEPA

Dance Educators Professional Association of NSW

Newsletter 2 2020

## Opening Eyes, Opening Minds, Opening Hearts

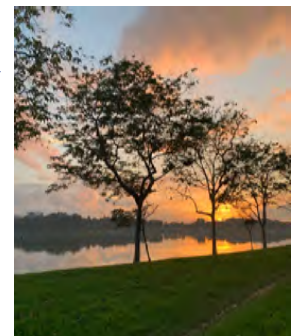
So it's 2020 and not only do we find ourselves confronted with COVID 19, but I personally found myself moving overseas to start a new job in the midst of a global pandemic. I moved from a beautiful school in the Sutherland Shire to another beautiful international school in Singapore. Back in October 2019 when I applied for the job I was blissfully unaware of what the next 12 months would hold for me and the world. Luckily, although COVID did present many challenges the transition has been relatively smooth.

Obvious issues involved visas, permission to leave Australia and permission to enter Singapore. Expectedly it came down to the absolute wire, to the point where I was granted permission to enter the day before I intended to leave. Whilst these were all stressful and problematic at the time, the biggest issues for me were not being able to attend the weddings, birthdays, baby showers and christenings of the people I hold most dear. This was possibly the most heartbreaking part of leaving, topped off with not knowing when I would be able to come back.



Now that I am here it is more than I had ever imagined. The energy and the dynamic of United World College South East Asia (UWCSEA), even in COVID times, is so motivating and I feel so privileged and excited to be a part of this community. The students are very similar to the students I had back home. However, they have higher levels of engagement in the world around them and their impact on this world, which is so encouraging to see. The sense of social justice not only pervades the school mission and curriculum, but it also is inherent in the conversations that happen both in the classroom and with colleagues.

It has taken a while for me to become accustomed to things like wearing a mask or adjusting the relentless humidity. But the biggest change for me has been moving from a curriculum and context that I have known for the last 17 years of my life to two brand new syllabi, GCSE Dance and the International Baccalaureate. I spent a lot of time, in quarantine, reading through guides and requirements, to find myself coming back to resources I have used year after year back home. As we know, dance is universal and what we do and teach transcends classrooms and in fact, countries. So not only was I able to use my prior knowledge and experience, I have been able to adapt this to a new and interesting context. The training I received at UNSW, along with the subsequent network of friends I made there, and the vast number of colleagues I've had throughout my career has provided me with not only the capacity to do this job, but also gave me the courage to take this opportunity to begin with. Whilst I may not be teaching in NSW I still feel very strong ties to my experience there, knowing that it has allowed me to get to where I am now, and for that I will be forever grateful. The experience of a high school dance teacher is so unique, you are often the only person in your school that really understands your subject and this can at times be frustrating and exhausting. However, I would remind you that there are so many of us across the state, and in fact the world, that you only need to reach out to your network to find that support and encouragement to keep you going.



Lauren Hickson  
Head of Dance  
United World College South East Asia (East Campus)

## Get to know the Committee



### **NATASHA COMELLI**

I had absolutely no idea that I would spawn from UNSW as 'a high school teacher' under the guidance of David Spurgeon and his unitard. Being a teacher was never on my radar and I still don't know what I want to do when I grow up. However, currently I'm in a high school teaching Dance, Italian, Music and Support Unit Performing Arts and all I do know is that I absolutely, unequivocally love to teach.

I scored the trifecta when I landed my first teaching role at Port Hacking High. Three brilliant mentors of Sandy Kilborn, Terri Martin and Jan Ayre guided me through my maiden years before a baptism by fire in an East London School with severely challenging welfare, crime and behaviour issues. I believe a combination of all of these experiences have built some solid foundations from and upon which I constantly strive to improve. I love to challenge people's perspectives and encourage the eternal question of 'why'.

My current role at Engadine High School has evolved over ten years as a result of the choice to procreate and birth four amazing humans in a very short period of time – which I truly believe is my greatest achievement ever. This has resulted in developing a wonderful 'work-wife' relationship that has allowed me to sustain that ever-challenging 'working-parent' role. I have experienced the joys of Regional and State Dance malarkies, School Spectacular shenanigans, Arts Unit Workshop presenting and HSC marking; however, hands down, nothing beats the pure joy of watching students explore, experiment and problem solve with their bodies in the realm of Dance Education.

## DEPA NSW ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This will take place on Wednesday 11th November 2020 at 5.00pm.

All DEPA members are kindly invited to join the committee in attending this meeting, and support the continued development of our association and 2020/21 Committee.



**Date:** Wednesday 11th November 2020

**Time:** 5.00pm

The meeting will be held online. DEPA NSW is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

**Meeting Topic:** DEPA NSW Annual General Meeting

**Time:** November 11, 2020 @ 5.00pm – Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney

Join the Zoom Meeting using this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88177346896?pwd=S0VsZVdrMDF4T1ZBS1dRbUpka3Yzdz09>

**Meeting ID:** 881 7734 6896

**Passcode:** 805945

If you would like to nominate for a position on the committee please complete the attached form and return to [dance@depansw.com.au](mailto:dance@depansw.com.au) by Monday 26th October 2020.

## DEPA NSW COMMITTEE NOMINATION FORM

The Office Bearer's and Ordinary Committee Members shall be elected at each Annual General Meeting of DEPA NSW.

Casual vacancies that occur during the current term may be filled at the discretion of the current committee.

Nominations must be individual financial members of the Association.

*NB: you must be a current financial member in order to submit a nomination form. Schools or organisations that are members may submit ONE vote only.*

I, .....(print full name) wish to nominate for the position of

.....Committee Member of DEPANSW.

Signature:

Date:

Home Address:

Work Address:

Telephone (Home):

Mobile:

Email:

Nominations for DEPA NSW Committee must be proposed and seconded by two financial members of the Association.

Proposed by: (print name)

Signature: Date:

Seconded by: (print name)

Signature: Date:

Nominations are to be returned to:

DEPA NSW

Email: [dance@depansw.com.au](mailto:dance@depansw.com.au) by Monday 26th October 2020