EVOLVE

INNOVATE

AUSTRALIAN YOUTH DANCE FESTIVAL

AYDF 2025

FESTIVAL REPORT

CONNECT

AYDF 2025 took place on the Traditional Lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nations.

We pay our deepest respects to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We acknowledge their enduring connection to Country, dance, culture and storytelling.

Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

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AYDF 2025

AYDF 2025 AT A GLANCE

4
days of dance

56
Youth Participants

26
Professional Participants

15
Independent Participants

29
Youth Workshops

9
Professional Workshops

3
Excursions

5
Film Screenings

6
Youth Dance Companies

5
Performances

34
Artists Employed

118
Mixtape Viewers

AYDF 2025

ABOUT AYDF 2025

The 2025 Australian Youth Dance Festival (AYDF) showcased an extraordinary diversity of offerings across its Youth and Professional Development (PD) streams, providing participants with a rich array of dance styles, techniques, and creative experiences. Youth participants engaged in workshops spanning contemporary and street dance forms such as Le Bop, Afro Dance, LiteFeet, Krump, and Partnering Acrobatics at NICA, fostering both technical skill and collaborative artistry. The PD stream offered in-depth sessions focused on leadership, safe dance practices, cultural sensitivity, mental health awareness, and community engagement, supporting educators and emerging leaders in the dance sector. Complementing these workshops, excursions to prominent Melbourne institutions like Dancehouse, Lucy Guerin Inc.'s WYXZ Studios, and Chunky Move allowed participants to connect directly with professional dance environments through tours, film screenings, and artist talks, further enriching the festival experience.

A total of 82 people attended the Festival, with 56 participants in the Youth stream and 26 in the PD program, reflecting a vibrant and engaged community. One of the festival's most anticipated highlights was the AYDF MixTape Performance Evening—a dynamic showcase that brought together some of the country's most talented young creatives. This event featured live stage and screen performances from the attending youth dance companies, alongside a newly introduced independent curated festival performance piece, captivating an audience of 118. The evening celebrated the diverse voices and innovative choreography that embodied the spirit of the AYDF, underscoring the festival's role as a pivotal platform for emerging dance artists and educators nationwide.

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YOUTH WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

The Youth stream featured a wide variety of workshops that covered numerous dance styles and creative approaches. Participants experienced Le Bop (Modern Jive), which traced its origins to 1950s France and incorporated an eclectic mix of styles including Jive and Lambada. Contemporary workshops focused on mind and body activation, isolations, and phrase work, led by facilitators such as Georgia Rudd, Siobhan McKenna, Darci O'Rourke, and Stephanie Lake. Afro Dance workshops introduced West and Central African styles influenced by Afrobeats, while LiteFeet workshops brought energetic and athletic street dance from Harlem to the festival.

Partnering Acrobatics sessions at NICA provided foundational skills in weight sharing, flying, and basing with a partner, facilitated by Jon Griffingham and Linda Sastradipradja. The FLINTA+ workshop offered a safe space for female, lesbian, intersex, non-binary, trans, and agender dancers to create movement with a street dance focus. Improvisation workshops encouraged dancers to disrupt habits, listen to impulses, and make decisions in the moment.

> I had a really great time, it was cool to have so many amazing people gathered to just dance and share their knowledge.
>
> — Youth Participant

YOUTH WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Independent attendees took part in a collaborative choreography workshop led by Rachel Coulson, culminating in a unique performance piece. The Youth Spark Lab facilitated discussions and question preparation for the World Café event, supporting emerging artists' voices. Additional style classes included Hip Hop, Floorwork, Musical Theatre Jazz, W_acking, and Counter Technique, led by a range of expert facilitators. Contemporary and 4/4 Repertoire workshops engaged dancers with choreography from renowned Australian choreographers and explored number-based movement.

The Youth stream concluded with warm-up and recovery sessions, Krump basics, Improv versus Freestyle, and a Cypher for freestyle exploration and sharing, offering a comprehensive and diverse learning experience throughout the festival.

EXCURSIONS

For the first time in AYDF history, both the Youth and PD cohorts participated in a series of enriching excursions that deepened their engagement with Melbourne's dance community.

At Dancehouse, participants took part in a street dance workshop led by facilitators Efren Pamilacan and Josh Wright, gaining insight into the independent street dance scene and its vibrant culture. Everyone also watched a screening of My Black Dog, a powerful youth-focused film by FLING Physical Theatre that addresses adolescent mental health through dance and performance, supported by Dancehouse and Headspace Collingwood.

The visit to Lucy Guerin Inc. WYXZ Studios offered an intimate chat and film screening with Lucy Guerin and Estelle, providing valuable perspectives on professional dance practice and artistic collaboration.

At Chunky Move, they enjoyed a studio tour, film screening, and discussion with former resident artist Mel Lane, exploring the company's creative processes and innovative approaches to movement.

Together, these experiences offered participants a meaningful connection to the diverse voices and practices of Melbouren's dance sector.

> I got to visit all of the different places in Melbourne, the professional opportunities were amazing to see in person.
>
> — Youth Participant

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

The professional development (PD) stream offered participants a range of professional learning opportunities aimed at leadership development, safe dance practices, cultural competency, and community connection. The program began with an introduction to the PD stream and a collective connection session led by Adam Wheeler, followed by workshops addressing leadership and community building challenges within dance sectors.

Teaching skill development was supported through a youth dance-focused workshop led by Kyall Shanks. Injury prevention, safe movement, and anatomy were covered in sessions by the Performance Medicine team, while mental health awareness workshops, facilitated by Cristina D'Agostino, and provided strategies to support young dancers' wellbeing.

A child safety workshop delivered by the Commission for Children and Young People offered insight into national frameworks and practical strategies for creating safe dance environments. Additional workshops explored Melbourne's street dance culture, facilitated by Geoffrey Lim and colleagues, and respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contemporary dance, led by Thara Brown.

The PD program also included connection and discussion sessions with Youth Dance Australia representatives, fostering sector-wide collaboration and knowledge sharing.

SPARK LAB

The Youth Spark Lab was a powerful space where young dancers opened up about everything — their hopes, fears, struggles, and what keeps them moving. They talked about finding the joy in dance again, being brave enough to try new things, and how important it is to connect with others who get what they're going through. There were real talks about feeling like you don't quite fit, dealing with money stress, and fighting off that voice inside that says you're not good enough. But alongside that was a deep love for dance — how it's more than just movement, it's community, storytelling, and even medicine for the soul. They shared thoughts on technology, identity, and how to keep dance safe and welcoming for everyone, no matter who they are or where they come from.

All those raw and honest conversations flowed into the World Café event, where youth and professional development participants came together to dream big about the future of dance. They imagined a world where funding is easier to get, mental health support is real and accessible, and dance spaces feel open and safe for everyone. There was a strong vibe of breaking down barriers, sharing respect, and making sure every dancer's voice counts. It wasn't just talk — it was a real call to keep pushing, keep creating, and keep building a dance community that's about connection, care, and endless possibilities.

> The World Cafe event was helpful to connect the PD and Youth stream so that we could listen to their needs and priorities.
>
> — PD participant

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FLING
PHYSICAL THEATRE

MIX TAPE

The AYDF Mixtape was a bold and eclectic celebration of youth dance in Australia. Showcasing the depth, diversity, and imagination of the next generation of artists, the one-night-only event featured a dynamic line-up of live performances and film works from leading youth dance companies and independent artists.

From heartfelt reflections and cultural storytelling to rebellious screen dance and surreal movement theatre, each piece offered a glimpse into the unique voices shaping the future of dance in Australia.

The performance also included a brand new, collaboratively created work developed during the festival under the guidance of choreographer Rachel Coulson, an inspiring testament to the creative power of young people.

Set against the dramatic backdrop of the Skydeck at Space Dance & Arts Centre, The AYDF Mixtape was a raw, expressive and unforgettable evening of dance.

MIX TAPE PLAYLIST

AFTER
FLING Physical Theatre

CHAPTERS
Wagana and DUST Youth Dancers

THE L2R STORY
L2R Dance

INDEPENDENT PIECE
Choreographed by Rachel Coulson

CONCRETE SLEEP
Youth Dance Makers Initiative

WHAT I KNOW NOW
REGRET
Belong Dance Theatre

FLUTE. BOOK AND CANDLE
Yellow Wheel

“Independent Piece” Choreographed by Rachel Coulson

“After” FLING Physical Theatre

“Flute, Book and Candle” Yellow Wheel

“What I Know Now-Regret”
Belong Dance Theatre

“Chapters” Wagana & DUST Youth Dancers

“After” FLING Physical Theatre

“What I Know Now-Regret”
Belong Dance Theatre

“Flute, Book and Candle” Yellow Wheel

“Chapters” Wagana & DUST Youth Dancers

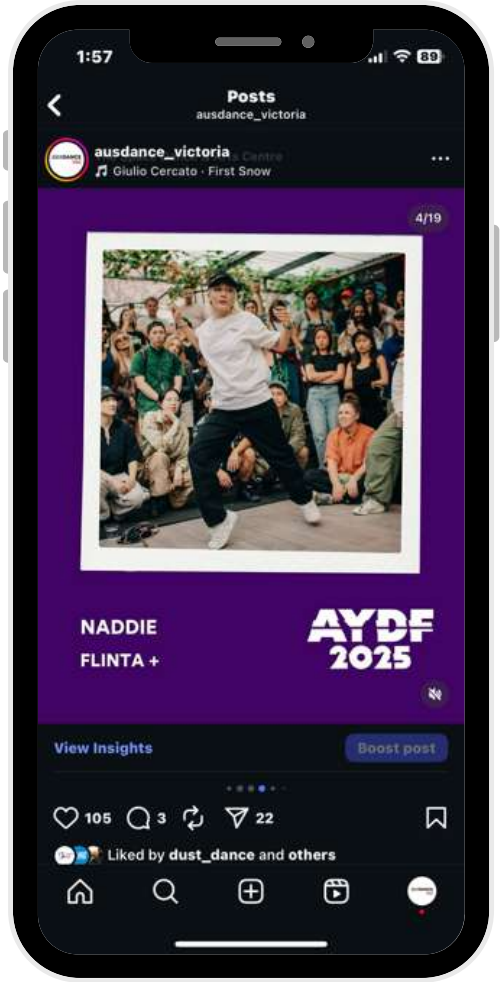
“Flute, Book and Candle” Yellow Wheel

“Independent Piece” Choreographed by Rachel Coulson

MARKETING CAMPAIGN

The marketing campaign for AYDF 2025 focused on highlighting the festival's expanded and diverse programming, as well as emphasising its inclusive and multidisciplinary approach to dance.

The campaign showcased the exceptional teaching artists, positioning AYDF as a must-attend event for youth dancers from all styles of dance. A key feature of the content was the festival's two artistic streams, which was designed to provide tailored pathways for youth dancers and professional development participants. Goals for the campaign drove ticket sales and registrations for both the festival program and the performance showcase, ensuring strong engagement and participation across all events.



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MARKETING CAMPAIGN

477K
Social Views

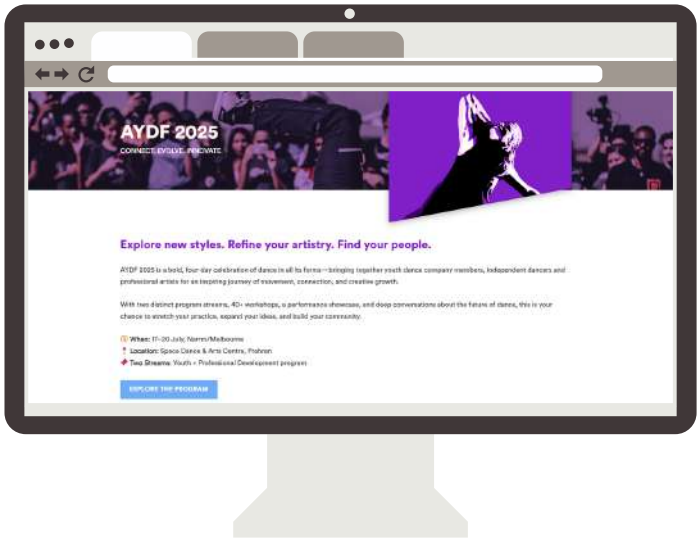
159K
Social Reach

4,363
Content Interactions

2,567
Social clicks

10.79
Email click rate

3,145
Landing Page Visits



Combined totals for Facebook and Instagram
between 1 April - 20 July 2025

AYDF 2025

FESTIVAL CREDITS

CREATIVE TEAM
Artistic Director — Kyall Shanks
Emerging Director — Amelia Minh Vu
Emerging Director — Toby McKnight

PRODUCING TEAM
Programming Manager — Elise Brennan
Marketing Manager — Ava Kahveci
Programming & Marketing Coordinator — Jordan Pollard

SUPPORT TEAM
Deborah Prentice
Eilannin Harris-Black
Stephanie Clare-Cover

AYDF MIXTAPE
Sound, Video & Lighting Operator — Brandon Duncan
Venue Manager — Ariel Bud
Production set up — Ariel Bud & Brandon Duncan
Front of house — Elise Brennan, Ava Kahveci & Jordan Pollard

PHOTOGRAPHY. VIDEOGRAPHY
Adam Wheeler, Brandon Duncan and Dominic Steele

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FESTIVAL CREDITS

YOUTH WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

Le Bop (Modern Jive) — Deb Cantoni
Contemporary — Georgia Rudd, Siobhan McKenna, Darci O'Rourke, Kimball Wong, Tra Mi Dinh
Stephanie Lake Contemporary Repertoire — Stephanie Lake with Kimball Wong and Tra Mi Dinh
Afro Dance — Gracieuse Amah
LiteFeet— Rob Aspinall
Partnering Acrobatics at NICA Studios— Jon Griffingham and Linda Sastradipradja
FLINTA+ (Safe space for Female, Lesbian, Intersex, Non-binary, Trans, Agender) — Naddie
Contemporary Improvisation — Siobhan McKenna
Independent Choreographic Workshop — Rachel Coulson
Youth Spark Lab — Jacqui Maida and Amelia Minh Vu
Hip Hop — Oliver Le
Floorwork — Rachel Coulson
Musical Theatre Jazz — Madeleine Mackenzie
W_acking — Carolyn Ooi
Counter Technique — Chimene
Contemporary Repertoire — Kimball Wong
Chunky Move 4/4 Repertoire — Kyall Shanks and Nikki Tarling
Independent Performance Rehearsal — Toby McKnight
Warm Up — Emily McLean from Performance Medicine
Massages — Luca Negri from Performance Medicine
Warm-up and Recovery — Beth Lane and Paddy Meesman
Krump Basics — Troi-Saraih and Aleena Panagopoulos
Improv v Freestyle — Zoee Marsh
Cypher — Oliver The Unguided as host and Rob Aspinall as DJ
World Café Event — Kyall Shanks, Toby McKnight, Amelia Minh Vu and Jacqui Maida

FESTIVAL CREDITS

PD WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

Introduction to PD & Community Connection — Adam Wheeler
The Starting Point: Leadership & Community Building — Adam Wheeler
Teaching Skill Set - Youth Dance Focus — Kyall Shanks
Safe Dance Practices: Building a Secure and Supportive Body — Elise McMahon from Performance Medicine
Mental Health Awareness for working with young people — Cristina D'Agostino
Evolving Child Safety in Dance — Commission for Children and Young People's Frances Blair and Ashley Turkenburg
Connecting with Melbourne's Street Dance Community — Geoffrey Lim, Carmen Yih and Monique Nightingale
Respectful Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dance — Thara Brown
Connection & Discussions with Youth Dance Australia — YDA representatives

Thanks so much for having me as part of AYDF this year! The energy of all the students was incredible and I hope you guys are proud of such an amazing festival!

— Oliver Le

AYDF 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to our generous sponsors, without whom AYDF 2025 would not have been possible.

YDA
YOUTH DANCE AUSTRALIA

VICTORIA State Government | CREATIVE VICTORIA

VicHealth

LGI

The Space Dance & Arts Centre

PERFORMANCE MEDICINE

DANCEHOUSE

CHUNKY MOVE

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