

NEWS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

For immediate release Thursday 18 May 2017



The Australian Ballet's Ella Havelka. Photo Daniel Boud.

The Australian Ballet's Ella Havelka honoured with prestigious *InStyle* Women of Style Award

InStyle last night announced at a red carpet event in Sydney that The Australian Ballet's Corps de Ballet dancer **Ella Havelka** has won the coveted *InStyle* and Audi Women of Style Award in the category of Arts and Culture.

Ella became the first Indigenous dancer to join The Australian Ballet in the company's 50-year history. Ever since watching *Swan Lake* on VHS at age 13, Ella has been transfixed by dance. She took ballet classes as a child and was eventually accepted into The Australian Ballet School where she graduated in 2007. Ella made her first appearance with Bangarra Dance Theatre in 2009, and then in 2012 performed in Australia and New York with Bangarra and The Australian Ballet in *Warumuk – in the dark night* to celebrate the Ballet's 50th anniversary. It was following this pivotal performance that Artistic Director David McAllister invited Ella to join the company. Her remarkable journey came full circle in 2015 when she danced in the touring production of *Swan Lake* – the ballet that transformed her life. In 2016 Ella's story was turned into a feature length documentary, *ELLA*, and debuted at the Melbourne International Film Festival to great success.

Born in Dubbo and a descendant of the Wiradjuri people, Ella credits her mother as her greatest inspiration who, along with her early dance teachers and friends, has influenced Ella to become the talented soulful dancer she is today.

Away from the demands and rigour of performing on stage, Ella continues to cultivate her deep connection with her Indigenous heritage by creating and selling artworks

including traditional Aboriginal woven baskets to help raise funds for Oxfam Australia. She also paints and designs Lino prints, some of which are on display at the Wagga Wagga Arts Gallery.

Established in 2009, the *InStyle* Women of Style Awards celebrate and champion talented Australian women who, like Ella, have made a significant impact in their careers and communities. Commenting on her award, Ella said "It was incredibly humbling to be nominated alongside such innovative and intelligent women. To then win the award in the Arts and Culture category is a major honour. It's also testament to the best advice my mother ever gave me, which was to always persevere because slow and steady wins the race."

Ella's award was judged by a formidable panel of Australian women including filmmaker Gillian Armstrong, actress Nicole Kidman, entrepreneur Layne Beachley, fashion designer Collette Dinnigan and Microsoft Australia CEO Pip Marlow.

The Australian Ballet's Artistic Director **David McAllister** is delighted by the announcement. He said "We are extremely proud of Ella for her tenacity both on and off the stage. Her contribution to dance and her passion for the arts, as well as her ability to engage the community is truly inspiring. The Australian Ballet proudly celebrates the diversity of its cultural make up and it is great to have *InStyle* reflect this in their pages."

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