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For one Australian dance theatre company, inclusion and diversity are celebrated every time they step on stage.

Adelaide's award-winning Restless Dance Theatre is a unique inclusive contemporary dance performance company, whose dancers include people with and without disability.

And for South Australian NDIS participants Charlie Wilkins, Darcy Carpenter, Jianna Georgiou, and Michael Hodyl, that means a career in the arts doing what they're best at - and what they most love.

All four professional dancers live with Down syndrome and are supported through their NDIS funding to attend dance training with Restless Dance Theatre.

"I love Restless, it's like another home for me," said Jianna, who has performed internationally, and also works with Restless Dance Theatre as a director.

"I'm very happy and comfortable here. I'm very relaxed and comfortable on stage. I feel happy and I am definitely confident when I am dancing.

"When I was little, I wanted to be more confident and performing and being professional and independent, as I am right now. So yes, I am very happy at Restless."

Charlie Wilkins and Jianna Georgiou, photo by Roy Vandervegt

Jianna, 29, Darcy, 23, Charlie, 21, and Michael, 31, all recently performed at the Adelaide Festival, one of Australia's leading cultural events and one of the world's major celebrations of the arts, which successfully went ahead this year with COVID restrictions in place.

Along with the remaining Restless cast, they performed the critically acclaimed 'Guttered', a unique and captivating production, set in the unlikely backdrop of a 10-pin bowling alley.

The company will take the production on the road to both Brisbane and Sydney during the next 10 months.

'Guttered' is the original creation of Restless Dance Theatre Artistic Director Michelle Ryan, who lives with Multiple Sclerosis and is also supported in her career by the NDIS.

Michelle says the piece explores important messages about people living with disability regarding independence and the concept of 'the dignity of risk'.

"Sometimes helping someone with a disability, even when it is with good intentions, robs them of their chance to grow," said Michelle.

Michelle says working with all dancers at Restless Dance Theatre – both with and without disability - is a privilege.

“I love working with the dancers at Restless as they are passionate, professional and always disarmingly honest,” she said.

“It is so important for these wonderful dancers to be acknowledged as artists and for audiences to see diversity on stage.”

Jianna’s parents Pat and George Georgiou say NDIS support and Restless Dance Theatre provide their daughter with a meaningful career and the chance to live her dream.

“Restless means Jianna can do the things she’s passionate about, which is performing and being on stage,” said George.

“We really have to constantly remind ourselves how lucky we are she’s doing something like this. For anyone it’s exciting to be in the dance world.

“Restless Dance is a godsend, NDIS is a godsend. Take one of those two things away and it’s a different life for all of us. That’s the honest truth.”

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