

Armidale dancers captivate Sydney audience

For a group of talented young people, the invitation to participate in local not-for-profit arts organisation Beyond Empathy's Dance Camp held in Sydney late last year was a dream come true. Five days of workshops led by professional performing artists culminated in a stellar performance at Sydney Theatre Company's Open Day at the Wharf.

Their journey to Sydney came about because many have been involved in Beyond Empathy's leadership programs and arts-based projects in Armidale, Bowraville and the Far North Coast, of NSW, and Tennant Creek, NT, and they all revealed a talent for the performing arts.

The young people spent five days rehearsing with a creative team of noted professional artists that included Morganics, Travers Ross, Nicole Iovine (Lamb), Tammie Jarrett, Jason Winters and Chris Merriman. All the camp's activities were filmed by Ming D'Arcy, with sound by Dylan Shepherd.

"Interacting with these artists and hearing stories of how they got to where they are now in their careers was so inspiring for these kids," said Kellie Martusciello,

Beyond Empathy's Participant Support Coordinator for the dance camp who has worked closely with many in the group for a number of years. "The artists were so generous with their knowledge, giving these kids confidence in their own abilities and making them realise that they, too, can follow their dreams."

Directed by Morganics and long-time Beyond Empathy dance mentor Travers Ross, the young dancers, who had never worked together before, developed an original and innovative performance piece titled *Here I am*. The work tells the story of young people finding their place in the world and the choreography combined contemporary forms of dance, including hip hop and break dance, among others.

"It was a truly profound and moving experience," said Kim McConville, Executive Director of Beyond Empathy, describing the group's performance of *Here I am* at Pier 2/3 in Sydney's historic Walsh Bay precinct. "At Beyond Empathy we are honoured to work with such naturally gifted and generous young people; I think everyone in the audience left the performance having been touched



Armidale participant Kate Foster (centre) during a dance camp rehearsal.

by it."

Beyond Empathy is an Armidale-based not-for-profit organisation that uses the arts to improve the lives of disadvantaged young people

in communities across Australia. Beyond Empathy's Dance Camp and the opportunity to participate in Sydney Theatre Company's Open Day at the Wharf was made

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