

monkey baa

Josephine
Wants to
Dance

learning pack

Based on the book by Jackie French and Bruce Whatley
Written for the stage by Eva Di Cesare, Sandie Eldridge and Tim McGarry
Photo by Alex Vaughan

Monkey Baa respectfully acknowledges the custodians of this nation and honours their enduring cultural and spiritual connection to the lands, waters and seas. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, on whose lands we work, live and share stories.

Monkey Baa tours across many nations. Our offices are in Sydney and Brisbane. We respectfully acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and the Turrbal and Jagera people in Brisbane and its surrounds.



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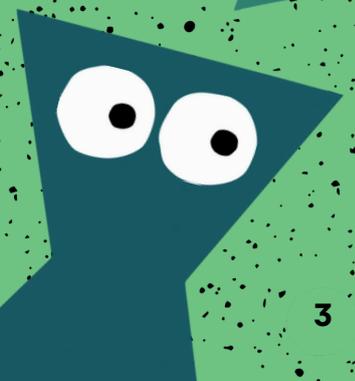
Hello!

We are delighted to share this resource with you, created to enhance your exploration of our production of *Josephine Wants to Dance*. Based on the beloved book by Jackie French and Bruce Whatley, and brought to life on stage by Eva Di Cesare, Sandra Eldridge and Tim McGarry, with music and lyrics by Phillip Scott, this musical is a joyous celebration of courage, persistence and following your dreams.

The story of Josephine, the kangaroo who loves to dance, encourages students to embrace their unique talents and shows the power of determination and self-belief. With humour and heart, it also introduces themes of resilience, teamwork and individuality, sparking meaningful classroom discussions.

This learning pack is designed for students in Foundation to Years 1–4, with activities and insights tailored to the Australian Curriculum. Inside, you'll find engaging classroom activities, a Dreamtime story by Michael J Connolly and a closer look at how the book was transformed into a stage production. These resources aim to inspire creativity, cultural understanding and a love of storytelling, while bringing the magic of Josephine's journey to life in your classroom.

Alexander Andrews
Learning & Engagement Specialist





She's bold
She's bouncy
She's back!

Josephine is a kangaroo who loves to dance. Her little brother, Joey, tells her kangaroos don't dance, they hop — but Josephine continues to point her toes and leap through the air. When a ballet troupe comes to Shaggy Gully, she desperately wants to dance like the ballerinas in pink tutus and silk ballet shoes.

On the day of the first performance, the ballet company is in trouble. The prima ballerina twists her ankle, and the understudy has a splinter in her toe. Who can dance the lead role? Josephine's talents are called upon to help save the day. Can she do it? And more importantly, does it matter that she's a kangaroo?

Director	Jonathan Biggins
Composer and Lyricist	Phil Scott
Choreographer	Tim Harbour
Set and Costume Designer	James Browne
Lighting Designer	Emma Lockhart Wilson
Sound Designer	David Bergman
Music Director	Michael Tyack



Themes of the show

Pursuit of dreams

The story is about Josephine and her big dream to dance. Even when others doubt her and challenges come her way, she never gives up. Her journey shows how important it is to chase what you love.

Self-belief and confidence

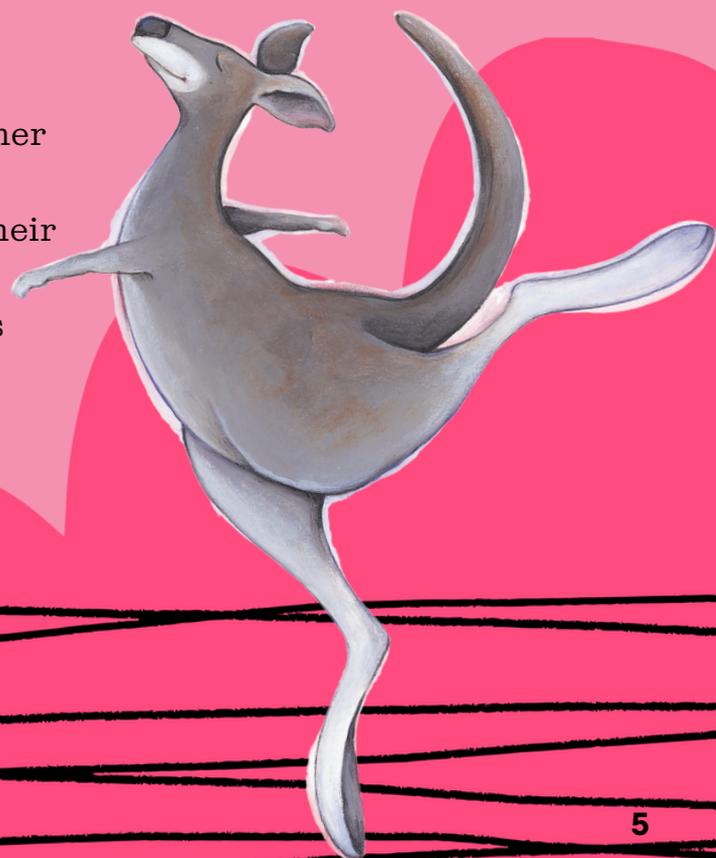
Josephine's journey is all about building her confidence and believing in herself. Even though her brother Joey and others doubt her, she keeps practicing and improving her dance skills. In the end, her success shows how important it is to trust yourself.

Individuality and identity

The story celebrates individuality as Josephine follows her dream. It encourages readers to embrace what makes them unique and pursue their passions, even when they challenge traditional ideas or expectations.

Supportive relationships

The bond between Josephine and her brother Joey, despite his early doubts, shows the importance of supportive relationships. Their story reminds us that encouragement and understanding from loved ones can help us achieve our dreams.





Meet the cast

Lily Baulderstone

Josephine

Lily graduated from VCA with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Music Theatre, following a Certificate IV at WAAPA. Her credits include Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (Crossroads Live/GFO), Into the Woods (Watch This), 9-5 The Musical (Crossroads Live/GFO), Cruel Intentions: The 90s Musical (David Venn Enterprises), and Mamma Mia! The Musical (Australian Tour).



Callum Slater

Joey / Various Roles

Callum, a 2018 Queensland Conservatorium Musical Theatre graduate, is a versatile performer across stage and screen. Recent screen credits include From All Sides (Gemme De La Femme) and It's Our Time (Joyhouse Productions). He has toured with Brainstorm Productions (2020–2021), Echelon Productions (2019, 2022, 2024), and Gibber Theatre Company (Smashed, 2023). Theatre highlights include Yank! A WWII Love Story (Woodward Productions), Dene: Adult (La Boite Theatre Company), and Broadway on Screen (Queensland Pops Orchestra).



Nina Carmen

Big Annie / Various Roles

Nina, a Queensland Conservatorium Griffith graduate (2020), played Ali in the Australian tour of Mamma Mia! The Musical and recently appeared in A Gay Escapade with Little Triangle. Their credits include Hermia in A Midsummer Night's Dream (Serpentine Arts Theatre), Tweedle Dum in Alice in Wonderland (SK Entertainment), and featured soloist at the Queensland Symphony Orchestra's 2021 Music Theatre Gala. Nina also toured schools in QLD and NSW with Meerkat Productions.



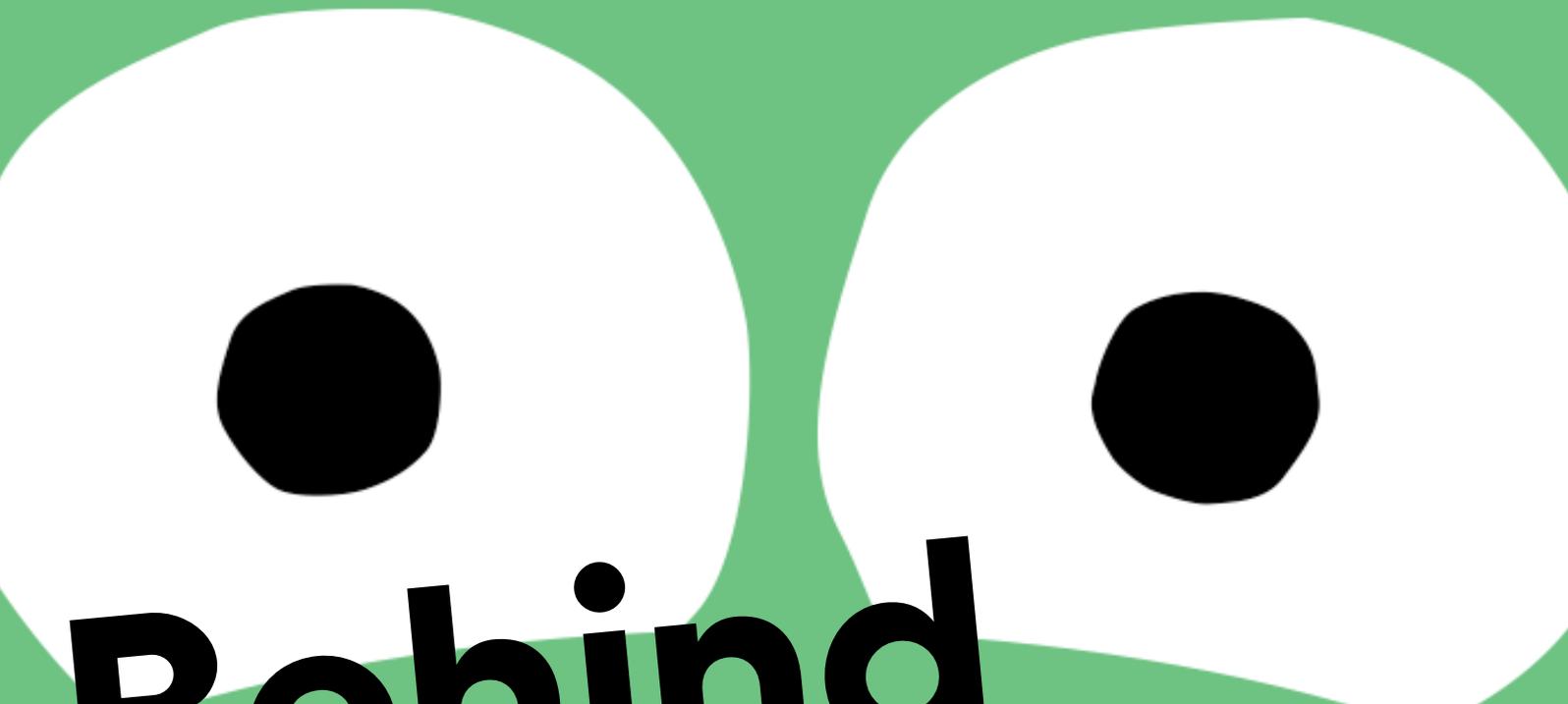
Hannah Gwatkin

Ballet Teacher / Various Roles

Hannah is a versatile cabaret performer, singer, actor, dancer, and saxophonist with a Bachelor of Musical Theatre from the Queensland Conservatorium and a Diploma of Music. Her credits include Eco-Worrier: A Climate Cabaret (Sydney Fringe), Not Today (Rogue Projects), A Chorus Line (Mad About Theatre), Big Blue Sky: A Peter Garrett Story (NIDA), and The Boy from Oz: The Arena Musical (Overtur). She also runs an eco-friendly party entertainment business, Little Footprint Parties.







**Behind
the scenes**

**Theatre begins with an idea,
a spark of imagination.**



Creating the show

At Monkey Baa, ideas come from the world around us and the people we share it with. Many of our plays are inspired by picture books and novels written by authors from Australia. Josephine Wants to Dance is based on a picture book by Australian author Jackie French and illustrator Bruce Whatley.

Jackie French says Josephine is based on a real kangaroo! Her name was Fuchsia, and she came to Jackie's family with a broken tail after getting stuck in a fence. No one knew if she would hop again, but Fuchsia was a determined kangaroo. Little by little, she started hopping, jumping, leaping... and even dancing! Fuchsia's determination and love of dancing inspired the story of Josephine, a kangaroo who dreams of being a ballerina.

Adapting a book into a play takes a lot of thought and creativity. At Monkey Baa, we look for stories with a strong main character, exciting obstacles and challenges, big emotions, drama and adventure. When we first read Josephine Wants to Dance, we knew it would make a great show. Josephine's story is about being brave enough to be yourself and follow your dreams. It also teaches us that hard work and dedication are just as important as dreaming big.

And that's how Josephine leapt from the pages of the book to the stage!

Writing the script

The idea is transformed into a script by a playwright.

A playwright creates stories for the stage, writing characters, scenes and plots. Plays are unique because they combine two key elements: dialogue and stage directions.

Stories are powerful and magical. They let us explore new worlds, understand emotions and learn empathy. Plays bring these stories to life in a vibrant, dynamic way. The musical *Josephine Wants to Dance* was written by Eva Di Cesare, Sandra Eldridge and Tim McGarry, with songs by Phil Scott.

Let's chat with Eva Di Cesare



What was the inspiration behind the picture book?

Jackie French says *Josephine* is inspired by a real kangaroo, just like the animals in *Pete the Sheep* and *Diary of a Wombat*. *Josephine* is based on Fuchsia, a kangaroo who came to Jackie's family with a broken tail in plaster after getting caught in a barbed wire fence. They didn't know if she'd ever hop again, but Fuchsia was determined. Slowly, she began to hop, jump, leap and dance! As she recovered, she danced around the kitchen to *Newspaper Mama* with Jackie's son and even joined the family on afternoon walks, showing off her best dance moves along the way.

Why did you choose to adapt *Josephine Wants to Dance* for the stage?

We spend a lot of time reading books to find the perfect story to adapt for the stage. For a book to work as a stage show, it needs a strong protagonist's journey, obstacles, conflict, drama, and a satisfying—ideally exhilarating—conclusion. When we first read *Josephine Wants to Dance*, we were drawn to its themes and instantly loved it. The story is about having the courage to be yourself and follow your dreams, while also emphasising the importance of hard work, discipline and dedication to achieve success.



Josephine



Joey



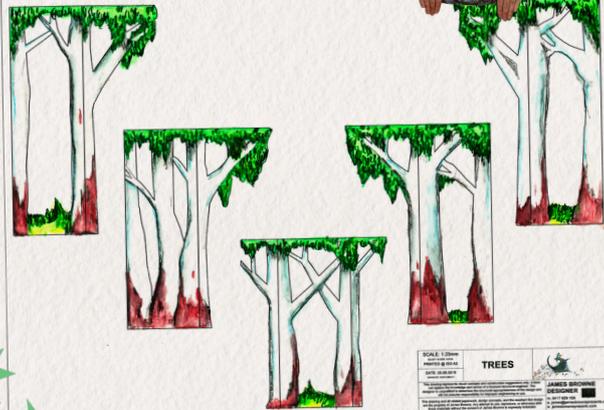
Ballet Director



Big



Annie



TREES



THE TOWN



Lyrebird



Brolga



Set and costume design

by James Browne

In rehearsals



Once a script is developed, it is handed over to a director and rehearsals begin.

A rehearsal is a practice session done before the play is seen by an audience. The rehearsal period is the time that leads up to the performance of a play. During this time, actors learn their lines and movement, theatre designers dream up the world of the play, composers write the music and playwrights develop their scripts. This all happens under the leadership of the director.



“With perseverance, learning from other people, and looking at the world around you, you can suddenly take everything in and go on to do what you want to do.”

— Jonathan Biggins, Director

“Growing up in Tasmanian theatre brought me so much joy, but I knew the stage wasn’t for me. That’s when I found stage management—a role that lets me be involved in every aspect of theatre, from building sets to operating lights. I feel incredibly fortunate to tour professional shows to small communities like my own, hoping to inspire the next generation of theatre technicians.”

— Kirsty Mangelsdorf, Stage Manager



Let's hear from the cast

“I love how physically demanding the show is! Between the dancing and moving like a kangaroo, it's no easy feat! I always warm up, cool down, stay hydrated and eat well. After a big week, I'll stretch to ease muscle tension. It's tough but so rewarding!”

— Lily Baulderstone

“My favourite part of the show is hearing the audience react throughout the show; from their laughs when Joey is rapping and dancing, to everyone cheering on Josephine, it's wonderful to get that immediate realisation that everyone is so swept up in the story and inspired to follow their dreams, while on the stage.”

— Callum Slater

“One of my greatest joys in being part of the show is hearing the shared laughter of children and parents, especially during some of Big Annie's scenes. Knowing that everyone can share in the same delight makes the show truly special for all.”

— Nina Carmen

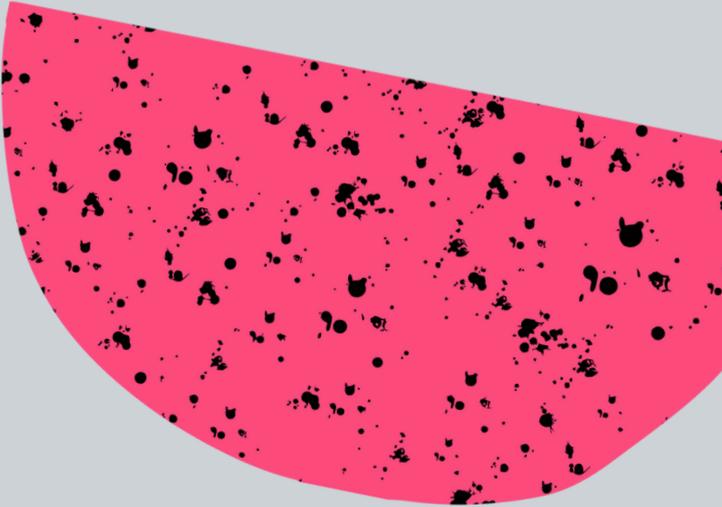
“A thrilling aspect of the show is the quick costume changes backstage, a complex dance of teamwork. Actors unzip, re-zip, don Broilga wings (leaving hands unusable) and remove Lyrebird tails, all in perfect unity to keep the show running smoothly.”

— Hannah Gwatkin

Performing the show







Classroom activities:

before the
show





Kangaroos

Size: Up to 6 feet tall and 90 kg
 Jump: Up to 9 metres long and 3 metres high
 Speed: Hops at 56 km/h
 Food: Eats grass and leaves
 Home: Lives in grasslands, forests and deserts
 Joeys: Baby kangaroos live in mum's pouch for 6-8 months
 Mobs: Lives in groups with a strong male leader



Brolgas

Size: About 1.8 metres tall with a wingspan of 2.4 metres
 Dance: Famous for their graceful, spinning dances
 Food: Eats plants, seeds, insects and small animals.
 Home: Lives in wetlands, swamps and grasslands.
 Chicks: Lay 1-2 eggs, chicks stay with parents for a year
 Groups: Lives in pairs or small flocks, except during breeding



Lyrebirds

Size: About 1 metre long, with beautiful tail feathers
 Sound: Mimics other birds, animals and even machines!
 Dance: Males fan their tails and dance during courtship
 Food: Eats insects, worms and seeds
 Home: Lives in forests and rainforests
 Nests: Builds dome-shaped nests on the ground or in trees



Australian animal habitats

Overview

In this activity, students will explore how animals in Josephine Wants to Dance (kangaroos, brolgas and lyrebirds) move and connect these movements to their habitats. Through English, Science and Drama, students will investigate, embody and describe animal behaviours and environments.

Curriculum connections

- English: Use descriptive language to write about animals
- Science: Identify and describe animal habitats and their features
- Drama: Use movement to embody animals and express their behaviours

Introduction

- Introduce the three key animals from Josephine Wants to Dance: kangaroos, brolgas and lyrebirds. Show pictures of these animals moving in their natural habitats. Ask students: Where do these animals live? How do their movements help them survive in their habitats?
- List the features of each animal's habitat:
 - Grasslands for kangaroos
 - Wetlands for brolgas
 - Forests for lyrebirds

Drama and movement exploration

- Guide students to embody the movements of each animal:
 - Kangaroo: Big leaps, balancing on powerful hind legs, hopping
 - Brolga: Graceful, sweeping movements with wings
 - Lyrebird: Quick, darting steps and mimicking sounds
- Call out different habitats (grasslands, wetlands, forests) and ask students to adapt their movements to suit. For example:
 - Kangaroos hopping around grassy plains
 - Brolgas wading and dancing in water
 - Lyrebirds scratching for food and mimicking sounds in a forest

Descriptive writing

- Have students choose one animal and write a short paragraph about:
 - How the animal moves
 - What its habitat looks, sounds and feels like
 - Why this movement is important for survival



Kangaroo facts

Where do kangaroos live?

- Kangaroos are native to Australia.
- They live in grasslands, woodlands, savannas and deserts.
- Different types of kangaroos prefer different habitats:
 - Red kangaroos: Found in dry, open areas like deserts and plains.
 - Eastern grey kangaroos: Live in forests and grasslands.
 - Western grey kangaroos: Prefer scrublands and coastal areas.

What do kangaroos eat?

- Kangaroos are herbivores, which means they eat plants. They eat:
 - Grass, a kangaroo's favourite food!
 - Leaves, from shrubs and small trees.
 - Flowers and seeds, when available.
- They chew their food like cows, using strong teeth to grind plants.

How do kangaroos move and communicate?

- Movement:
 - Kangaroos are known for their hopping! They use their strong back legs and feet to leap up to 9 metres in one jump.
 - Their tails help them balance while hopping and act as a third leg when standing or walking slowly.
- Communication:
 - Thumping: Kangaroos stomp their back legs to warn others of danger.
 - Clicks and grunts: They make small sounds to communicate.
 - Body language: Kangaroos use their ears, tails and posture to show how they feel.

Kangaroo tales

Overview

In this activity, students will research kangaroos and use their imagination to write a story about a kangaroo trying something new.

Learning outcomes

- Develop research skills to learn about kangaroos
- Explore themes of courage, perseverance and creativity
- Practise creative writing with descriptive language

Introduction

- Ask students what would happen if a kangaroo tried to do something they've never done before, like Josephine learning to dance?
- Prompt Ideas:
 - What if a kangaroo wanted to play a musical instrument?
 - What if a kangaroo tried to climb a tree like a koala?
 - What if a kangaroo decided to explore the ocean?
- Provide students with fact sheets or simple online resources about kangaroos. Encourage them to answer these questions:
 - Where do kangaroos live?
 - What do they eat?
 - How do they move and communicate?

Writing and sharing

- Students write a short story about their kangaroo. Encourage them to:
 - Describe the kangaroo's environment and personality
 - Explain what new activity the kangaroo wants to try and why
 - Show the challenges the kangaroo faces and how they overcome them
 - Use a story template with a beginning, middle and end
- Students can read their stories aloud or share them in small groups.
- Highlight themes of determination and creativity.
- Reflection questions:
 - What was the most exciting part of your kangaroo's adventure?
 - How did the kangaroo feel trying something new?
 - What did they learn about themselves?

Extension ideas

- Have students draw their kangaroo and the new activity they tried
- Create a collaborative story where each student adds one sentence about a kangaroo's adventure
- Students act out their kangaroo's adventure through movement

Beautiful Dancing Bird

By Michael J Connolly



Long ago back in the Dreamtime, there was a very beautiful girl called Brolga. She was the best dancer in the whole land, as her dancing was so graceful. Now Brolga hadn't always been such a good dancer. When she was a very little girl she used to get up very early in the morning and creep out of the gunyah (shelter) and onto the plains around her camp. Once she was there she would practice swooshing her arms like the Pelican, parading like the Emu and whirling like the wind. But Brolga didn't just do the old dances. She liked to make up new ones about the trees and the wind and dances about the Spirits and the animals. Soon Brolga's dance became so good that other tribes would come from far away just to watch Brolga dance her beautiful dance.

One day, Brolga went off by herself to dance out onto the dry red plain near her favourite tree, a big old Coolibah tree. Brolga began to dance in its shade, moving with the shadow of the old tree branches. As little puffs of dust rose from her feet, an evil Spirit named Waiwera looked down from his home in the Milky Way and saw Brolga. She was the most graceful and beautiful girl he had ever seen. Waiwera decided Brolga must be his, so he quickly spun himself into a whirlwind, and flew down onto the plain. As the wind came closer to Brolga it made a sudden great roaring sound and enclosed her. Brolga was swept off her feet and taken away.

When Brolga's tribe discovered she was missing, they went looking for her, but the wind had covered her tracks. They found the old Coolibah tree and a path where the whirlwind had been and decided to follow it. For several days they followed the path of the whirlwind until they came to a hill overlooking a small plain. There below they saw Waiwera and his captive, Brolga. The whole tribe rushed down hurling their spears and boomerangs. Realizing that he couldn't escape with Brolga, he decided that no one would have her. Waiwera swirled around her and just as the tribe reached her, she vanished. Brolga's tribe watched as the whirlwind wound its way slowly up into the sky. On the spot where it had been there now stood a big old Coolibah tree... but there was no sign of Brolga.

As they stood near the tree that Waiwera had left, a beautiful tall grey bird appeared from behind the tree. The bird began to stretch its wings and instead of flying away, it began to dance, making the same graceful moves that Brolga used to make. The bird danced taking long, hopping steps and floating on its graceful wings. It pranced slowly towards them and with one last graceful bound, flew up into the air and away! From then on they all knew that the evil spirit had changed Brolga into a bird.

Michael J Connolly
Dreamtime Kullilla-Art © Dreamtime Kullilla-Art
kullillaart.com.au

Brolga dance

Overview

Students will learn about the graceful movements of brolgas and create their own brolga dance. Through choreography, they will explore how dance can tell a story or express emotions.

Learning objectives

- Understand how brolgas use dance to communicate.
- Explore the connection between movement, emotions and storytelling.
- Develop creativity and teamwork through choreography.

Introduction

- Share facts about brolgas: Brolgas are known for their elegant courtship dances, involving bowing, leaping and spinning.
- These dances are used to communicate and attract a mate.
- Show a short video or photos of brolga dances for inspiration.
- Ask students what do you notice about how the brolgas move? How do their movements make you feel?
- Lead a gentle warm-up using smooth, flowing movements to mimic the grace of a brolga.

Movement exploration

- Guide students to experiment with movements inspired by brolgas:
 - Bowing: Slow, deep bends from the waist.
 - Leaping: Small or large jumps to represent excitement or energy.
 - Spinning: Gentle turns with outstretched wings.
 - Stretching: Extend arms and legs to create long, elegant shapes.

Creating the brolga dance

- Explain that their dance should tell a story or express an emotion. Some ideas include:
 - A brolga greeting a friend.
 - Brolgas dancing in the rain.
 - A brolga feeling joyful at sunrise.
- Encourage students to think about how different movements can show emotions like happiness, excitement or calmness.
- Divide students into small groups or let them work individually.
- Students create their brolga dance using a sequence of movements:
 - Beginning, middle and end.
- Each group or individual performs their brolga dance for the class.

Lyrebird sounds

Overview

Students will use their voices to mimic sounds inspired by the lyrebird, known for its remarkable ability to copy noises. This drama-focused activity encourages creativity, listening skills and improvisation as students explore and replicate sounds found in Josephine's environment.

Learning objectives

- Understand the lyrebird's unique ability to mimic sounds.
- Develop auditory awareness by replicating various sounds.
- Enhance drama skills through vocal and physical expression.

Introduction

- Explain how lyrebirds mimic sounds they hear in the wild, such as other birds, animals or even human-made noises like chainsaws or car alarms.
- Ask students what sounds do you think a lyrebird would hear in Josephine's environment?
- Lead a vocal and physical warm-up to prepare students for sound-making:
 - Stretch and shake out their bodies.
 - Practise simple vocal exercises like humming, buzzing and trilling.
- Play or describe different sounds (like kangaroo thumps, bird calls, wind or footsteps). Have students practise mimicking these sounds. Encourage them to experiment with pitch, volume and rhythm to match the sound.
- Divide the class into pairs or small groups. One student creates a sound, and their partner mimics it as accurately as possible, just like a lyrebird.

Sound exploration

- As a class, create a soundscape inspired by the lyrebird's environment. Assign small groups to represent different sounds:
 - Group 1: Animal sounds.
 - Group 2: Nature sounds.
 - Group 3: Human-made sounds.
- Have the groups perform their sounds together to recreate a day in the bush. The other groups copy the sounds they hear.

Extension ideas

- Create a short play where the lyrebird copies sounds to solve a problem or communicate with other animals.
- Students take turns mimicking a sound while the class guesses what it is.

Swan Lake



In the story of Josephine Wants to Dance, a ballet troupe comes to Shaggy Gully to perform the ballet Swan Lake. The story of Swan Lake follows a young prince named Siegfried who falls in love with a magical swan princess named Odette. Odette is under a wicked spell cast by an evil sorcerer, Rothbart, that turns her into a swan during the day and a human at night.

In Josephine Wants to Dance, Josephine is inspired by the beauty of ballets like Swan Lake. She believes in herself and works hard to become a dancer.

Both tales remind us to never give up on what we love, even if others doubt us. Whether you're a kangaroo in the bush or a princess in a magical lake, dreams can come true with passion and persistence!



Your visit to the theatre

Going to the theatre is a special experience, and everyone in the audience has an important role. Good theatre manners help everyone enjoy the show and show respect for the performers and each other.

What to expect

- Some parts of the performance could have loud music, sound effects or surprising noises.
- There may be colourful or flashing lights during the show.
- Actors might move quickly or make big gestures, which are part of the performance, so be prepared for some exciting action.
- The story could have unexpected moments, like a sudden noise, a big entrance or a surprising event.
- You might see parts of the stage change, like walls moving, lights shifting or props being added or removed.
- Some people might laugh or clap, so it can get a bit noisy.
- Whispering or talking can distract others, so save your questions for after the performance.
- Theatre shows can take some time, and it may feel like a long time concentrating, but it'll be much shorter than a movie.
- You'll get to clap at the end of songs or when the show finishes to show you enjoyed it.

Do's

- Arrive on time so you don't miss the beginning of the show.
- Sit quietly in your seat and face the stage.
- Clap your hands to show appreciation at the right moments, like the end of a performance or after a song.
- Use your listening ears and watch with your eyes.
- Stay seated during the performance unless it's an emergency.
- Whisper quietly to your teacher or classmate if you have a question.

Don'ts

- Talk loudly or shout during the performance.
- Eat noisy snacks or drinks.
- Kick the seat in front of you.
- Leave your seat before the performance ends (unless it's an emergency).

Social story

- If you would like a social story to support students with diverse needs, please contact the venue or Monkey Baa Theatre Company.





Classroom activities: after *the* show

Design a poster

Overview

Students will design a promotional poster inspired by the performance of *Josephine Wants to Dance*. This visual arts activity fosters creativity, storytelling, and an understanding of the play's themes.

Learning objectives

- Reflect on the themes and the story.
- Understand the elements of an effective promotional poster.
- Develop creative and visual communication skills.

Introduction

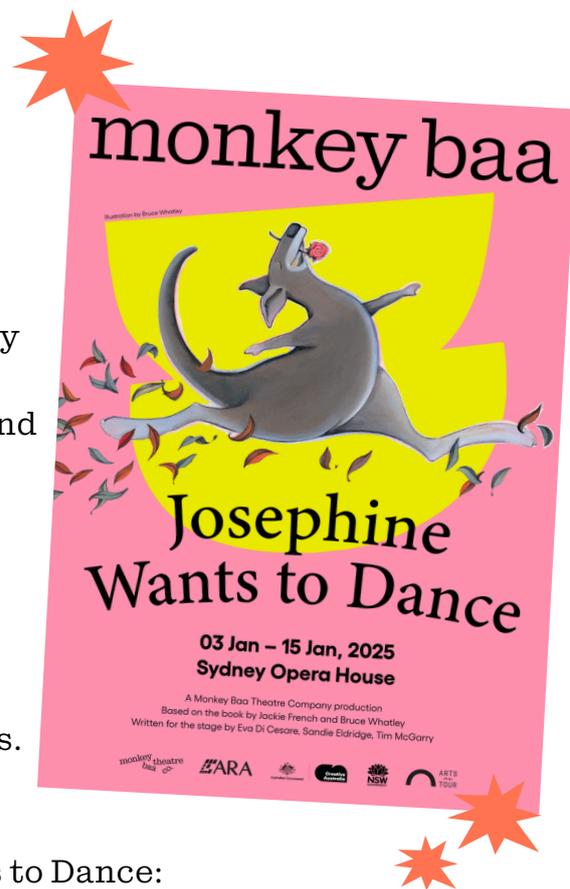
- Begin by discussing the story of *Josephine Wants to Dance*:
 - Who is Josephine, and what is her dream?
 - What were some key moments in the performance that stood out?
 - What emotions did the show evoke?
- Introduce the concept of promotional posters:
 - What makes a poster eye-catching?
 - What information must a poster include (title, images, event details)?
- Encourage them to think about colours, symbols (like ballet shoes, the bush, or Josephine herself), and emotions they'd like to represent.

Designing a poster

- Provide paper, markers, coloured pencils, and other art supplies. Alternatively, students can use digital tools if available.
- Create the poster:
 - Title: Clearly display *Josephine Wants to Dance*.
 - Imagery: Illustrate key moments or themes from the show.
 - Event Details: Add pretend performance dates, times, and location.
- Invite students to present their posters, explaining their design choices and how they represent the story.

Extension ideas

- Design a ticket for the performance to accompany the poster.
- Collaborate on a class poster combining everyone's ideas.



Design a costume

Overview

Students will sketch or collage their own costume ideas for a dancing kangaroo or other animals inspired by Josephine Wants to Dance. This visual arts activity encourages creativity, storytelling and an understanding of costume design for performance.

Learning objectives

- Explore the role of costume design in storytelling.
- Develop creative thinking and design skills.
- Understand how costumes reflect personality.

Introduction

- Start with a discussion about costumes in Josephine Wants to Dance:
 - What costumes did you notice during the show?
 - How do costumes help tell the story of a character or setting?
 - What do you think Josephine's costume might need to allow her to dance comfortably?
- Show examples of costumes from theatre or dance performances.
- Brainstorm as a class: What materials, colours, and styles might be used to create costumes for characters like Josephine, the brolgas, or other animals in the bush?

Designing a costume

- Provide sketch paper, pencils, coloured markers and craft supplies such as magazines, fabric scraps and glue for collaging.
- Design a costume for Josephine that reflects her dream to dance.
- Think about headpieces, footwear, fabric textures and accessories that suit the character.
- Invite students to present their designs to the class, explaining their creative decisions and how their costumes would work in the show.



Write a letter to Monkey Baa

Overview

Students will write a letter to Monkey Baa, sharing their reflections on Josephine Wants to Dance. This literacy-focused activity encourages students to express their thoughts, ask questions and practise writing.

Learning objectives

- Develop writing skills through structured letter writing.
- Reflect on personal experiences and learning from the show.
- Foster curiosity by asking thoughtful questions.

Introduction

- Begin by discussing letter writing:
 - What is the purpose of writing a letter?
 - Who are we writing to, and why is it special to communicate with the people who created Josephine Wants to Dance?
- Explain the structure of a letter:
 - Greeting: Start with “Dear Monkey Baa Theatre Company,”.
 - Introduction: Share their name and why they’re writing the letter.
 - Favourite moment: What part of the show did they enjoy the most and why?
 - Something they learned: What did the story teach them about determination, dance or following their dreams?
 - Questions: Encourage students to ask one or two questions about the show (e.g., How were the costumes made? What inspired the story? How did the actors learn to dance like animals?).
 - Thank Monkey Baa for the performance and sign off with their name.
- Decorate the Letter: Encourage students to add drawings or decorate the border of their letter with themes from Josephine Wants to Dance.

Sharing and reflection

- Ask volunteers to read their letters aloud to the class.
- Combine all the letters and send them to Monkey Baa Theatre Company either in the post or via email

Monkey Baa Theatre Company
36-64 George Street
The Rocks
NSW 2000

alex@monkeybaa.com.au

Create a play

Overview

Students will explore storytelling, performance, and teamwork by creating their own version of *Josephine Wants to Dance*.

Introduction

- Read aloud or summarise *Josephine Wants to Dance* by Jackie French and Bruce Whatley.
- Highlight key moments and characters, such as Josephine’s dream of dancing, Joey’s doubt, and the big performance.
- Emphasise the message about following your dreams, even if others think you can’t do it.
- Explain how a book can be adapted into a play, with actors, costumes, sets and dialogue.
- Discuss the roles involved in putting on a play, such as actors, set designers and directors.

Creating and performing the Play

- Work with each group to choose two or three important moments from the book to act out.
 - Josephine practicing her dance in secret.
 - Joey saying kangaroos can’t dance.
 - Josephine’s big moment performing in the ballet.
- As a class, create simple dialogue for the characters.
 - Joey: “Kangaroos don’t dance, Josephine!”
 - Josephine: “But I want to try! I love dancing!”
- Groups practice their scenes, deciding how to act out the movements and lines.
- Encourage creativity in how students interpret their characters (e.g., hopping like kangaroos or flapping like birds).
- Each group performs their scenes for the rest of the class.
- Arrange the scenes in order to create one continuous story, or let each group present independently.
- After each performance, encourage cheering and clapping to celebrate the effort.

Extension ideas

- Create costumes or props: Use craft materials to make kangaroo ears, bird wings, or a stage backdrop of the bush.
- Discuss themes: Talk about how Josephine’s story relates to persistence and creativity in their own lives.



Josephine Wants to Dance

Classroom workshop

Years K to 4
60 minutes

Step into the world of Josephine, the kangaroo with a dream to dance. This workshop encourages students to explore their courage, creativity and self-expression through drama and movement activities. Students bring Josephine's story to life, connecting with her journey as they learn to leap, twirl and imagine.

Led by professional teaching artists, this workshop aligns with the Australian Curriculum, enhancing classroom learning and complementing the show. It reaches thousands of students across Australia, empowering them to build confidence through creativity.

For \$15 per student, with a maximum of 30 students and a minimum charge of \$300, these workshops can be booked any day of the year, across Australia.



Curriculum Connections

Drama: Explore roles and dramatic action through imaginative play, using movement, expression and voice to portray characters and emotions.

English: Engage in discussions, share ideas, and create imaginative narratives inspired by Josephine's story.

Personal & Social Capability: Build confidence, resilience and empathy through group activities.

Health & PE: Refine movement skills like leaping, twirling and balancing. Explore expressive movement to communicate emotions and ideas.

Critical & Creative Thinking: Solve creative challenges through drama and movement.

Curriculum links

English

Foundation

- ACELA1430: Understand that texts can take many forms, can be very short or quite long, and that stories and informative texts have different purposes.
- ACELA1786: Explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories and informative texts.
- ACELA1437: Understand the use of vocabulary in familiar contexts related to everyday experiences, personal interests, and topics taught at school.
- ACELA1429: Understand that language can be used to explore ways of expressing needs, likes, and dislikes.

Year 1

- ACELA1444: Understand that language is used in combination with other means of communication, for example, facial expressions and gestures, to interact with others.
- ACELY1660: Make short presentations using some introduced text structures and language, for example, opening statements.
- ACELA1447: Understand that the purposes texts serve shape their structure in predictable ways.
- ACELY1788: Engage in conversations and discussions, using active listening behaviours, showing interest, and contributing ideas, information, and questions.
- ACELY1656: Respond to texts drawn from a range of cultures and experiences.

Year 2

- ACELA1460: Understand that spoken, visual, and written forms of language are different modes of communication with different features and their use varies according to the audience, purpose, context, and cultural background.
- ACELA1469: Identify visual representations of characters' actions, reactions, speech, and thought processes in narratives, and consider how these images add to or multiply the meaning of accompanying words.
- ACELY1666: Listen for specific purposes and information, including instructions, and extend students' own and others' ideas in discussions.
- ACELY1676: Listen to and contribute to conversations and discussions to share information and ideas and negotiate in collaborative situations.

Year 3

- ACELA1476: Understand that successful cooperation with others depends on shared use of social conventions, including turn-taking patterns and forms of address that vary according to the degree of formality in social situations.
- ACELY1677: Plan and deliver short presentations, providing some key details in logical sequence.
- ACELY1688: Use interaction skills such as acknowledging another's point of view and linking students' responses to the topic, using familiar and new vocabulary and a range of vocal effects such as tone, pace, pitch, and volume to speak clearly and coherently.
- ACELY1792: Use interaction skills, including active listening behaviours and communicating in a clear, coherent manner using a variety of everyday and learned vocabulary and appropriate tone, pace, pitch, and volume.

Year 4

- ACELA1488: Understand that social interactions influence the way people engage with ideas and respond to others, for example, when exploring and clarifying the ideas of others, summarising their own views, and reporting them to a larger group.
- ACELY1686: Identify and explain language features of texts from earlier times and compare with the vocabulary, images, layout, and content of contemporary texts.
- ACELY1689: Plan, rehearse, and deliver presentations incorporating learned content and taking into account the particular purposes and audiences.
- ACELY1694: Plan, draft, and publish imaginative, informative, and persuasive texts containing key information and supporting details for a widening range of audiences, demonstrating increasing control over text structures and language features.
- ACELY1692: Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning to expand content knowledge, integrating and linking ideas, and analysing and evaluating texts.

Arts

Drama

- ACADRM027: Explore role and dramatic action in dramatic play, improvisation, and process drama.
- ACADRM028: Use voice, facial expression, movement, and space to imagine and establish role and situation.
- ACADRM029: Present drama that communicates ideas, including stories from their community to an audience.
- ACADRM031: Explore ideas and narrative structures through roles and situations and use empathy in their own improvisations and devised drama.
- ACADRM032: Use voice, body, movement, and language to sustain role and relationships and create dramatic action with a sense of time and place.

Dance

- ACADAM005: Improvise and structure movement ideas for dance sequences using the elements of dance and choreographic devices.
- ACADAM006: Practice technical skills safely in fundamental movements.
- ACADAM007: Perform dances using expressive skills to communicate ideas, including telling cultural or community stories.

Science

Foundation

- ACSSU002: Living things have basic needs, including food and water.

Year 1

- ACSSU017: Living things live in different places where their needs are met.

Year 2

- ACSSU211: Living things grow, change, and have offspring similar to themselves.

Year 3

- ACSSU044: Living things can be grouped based on their observable features and can be distinguished from non-living things.

Year 4

- ACSSU073: Living things depend on each other and the environment to survive.

Humanities

Foundation

- ACHASSK015: The places people live and why they are important.

Year 1

- ACHASSK031: How the present, past, and future are signified by terms indicating time and by dates and changes that may have personal significance.

Year 2

- ACHASSK049: The connections of people in Australia to other places in Australia and across the world.

Year 3

- ACHASSK071: The importance of different cultural traditions and practices.
- ACHASSK072: The role that people of diverse backgrounds have played in the development and character of the local community.

Year 4

- ACHASSK088: The importance of environments, including natural vegetation and water sources, to people and animals in Australia and other places.

General capabilities

Critical and creative thinking

Students are encouraged to analyse, interpret, and create new interpretations of the story through playwriting, choreography, and artwork.

Personal and social capability

Activities on teamwork, such as creating group performances or collaborative soundscapes, build interpersonal and social skills.

Intercultural understanding

Incorporating the Dreamtime narrative introduces students to Aboriginal cultural perspectives and traditions.

