



New occupations – Kate Achilles

By Andrea Viney

Filling out the customs departure card on a recent holiday, Kate Achilles found herself contemplating something that had always been clear – her occupation. After nine years of working as a professional dancer both in Australia and abroad, Kate decided to put her performing career on ice to finish a university degree in Business Management started years before. But with this milestone came a question she didn't realise would be so difficult to answer – who was she if she wasn't a dancer?

For the past two years since her career transition began, Kate has been discovering the answer to this question. In 2006 while at university and looking for part-time work, Kate remembers feeling frustrated putting together her CV and trying to classify all her dance experience. Straight out of high school, she moved to Melbourne to train at the Australian Ballet School and from there an intense performance based career followed. She spent the next five years working between the Queensland Ballet Company and Tivoli Ballet in Denmark. Despite the wide array of skills dancers innately possess, Kate felt limited in her job options and received advice to 'leave out' the dance experience (from her CV) that made up the past nine years of her life. Around the same time, she noticed an ad for SCOPE and applied.

As one of the original 2007 SCOPE participants, Kate eagerly accepted the opportunity to be involved again in 2008. The program has played a huge part in Kate's career development, assisting her to explore opportunities and passions beyond her performing life, while retaining a connection to dance. Pursuing a new career in Business (Arts) Management, Kate still wants dance in her life, but more as something extra, rather than her primary source of income. 'With my degree I have more options. I can go back to dancing when I like and have more control over it.'

Kate completed her degree and has spent the year working on the *Brisbane Festival 2008*. She is currently working on a project with *Queensland Theatre Company* and dancing in an opera with *Opera Queensland*. The next stage is a big move to the UK. Unlike many of us who trek off without much of an idea what we'll find when we get there, thanks to SCOPE, Kate will leave with an action plan and a list of leads and contacts to follow up on. Whether providing job opportunities or just guidance and support, Kate says the contacts she has made through SCOPE and the conversations with her advisors have been extremely valuable. Recently, SCOPE funded* a flight to Sydney for Kate to meet with some industry contacts, including Richard Evans (Executive Officer of the Sydney Opera House), who was able to share industry experience and advice. 'I was talking about having to start at the bottom again after ten years in one industry and chewing at the bit about whether I should move into the Corporate World or Arts Management. He was able to say, 'Be patient ... look on it that you've had an amazing experience you can be proud of and appreciate that you've been able to follow a passion and are able to take off in another direction now.' That put me in my place.'

These are the kind of mentors that make Kate extremely grateful she discovered SCOPE. Kate warmly describes the conversations with her advisor Gene, as 'just like talking to a friend, only it's ok if most of the conversation is about you,' she says all industries need a version of SCOPE, 'How great to have someone problem solving your life and career – someone really listening to you.'

*SCOPE participants can apply to the program for funding to assist them in achieving the goals identified in their career action plan. Kate has applied and received funding for professional development, mentoring and networking. She also received funding from SCOPE to pay for part of her university degree.