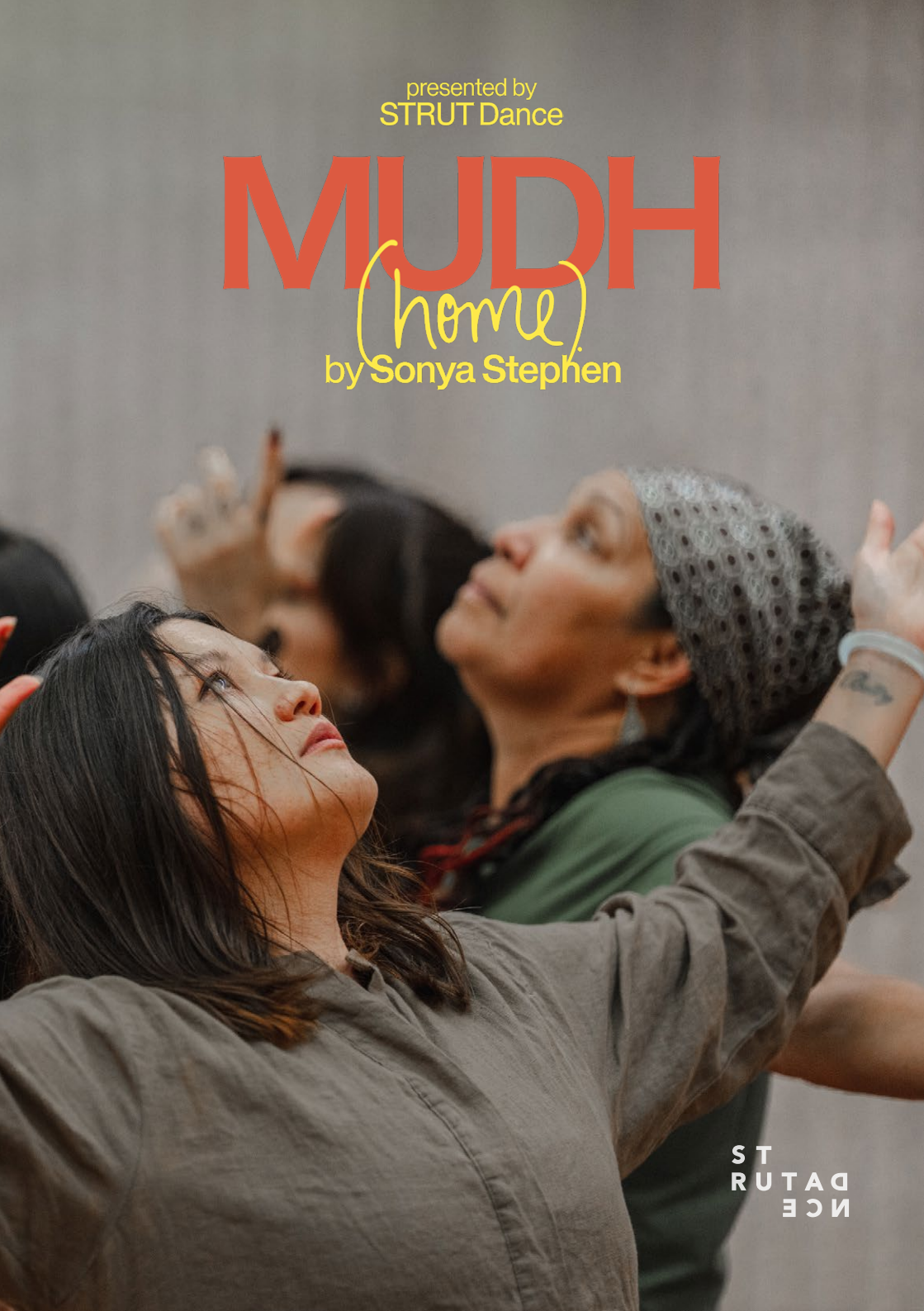
presented by
STRUT Dance
MUDH
(home)
by Sonya Stephen
STRUT DANCE



STRUT recognises Australian First Nations people as Australia's first dancers and acknowledges that all dance in Australia sits within the context of the continuum of First Nations and Torres Strait Islander culture. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we create and work, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation, who continue to nurture a deep and respectful relationship to land and sea. It is a great privilege and honour to create with them on their country.

We also respectfully acknowledge neighbouring groups throughout WA and honour their Elders across time.

A message from choreographer Sonya Stephen

Home is something every person understands, regardless of where they come from. Yet it can mean something different to every individual.

For me, *Mudh* is where my heart resides. It is a place of belonging, safety and connection. Through this project, I realised that home is not always a physical place. It lives within us. It can be found in memory, culture, family, language and the stories we carry.

Kala Lagaw Ya (KLY) is the traditional language of the people of the Western and Central Torres Strait Islands. *Mudh*, meaning “home,” comes from the Mabuyag dialect, spoken on Mabuiag, Badu and in St Pauls Village.

Initially, I wanted to create a work centred on women from diverse cultural backgrounds within the City of Stirling, a community I have lived in and cared about for many years. An image that has stayed with me is one of a migrant couple I saw; they were sitting together looking ahead with an expression of what seemed like deep worry on their faces. I found myself wondering about everything they might be carrying. How do you build a new life in a place where the language, systems and culture may be unfamiliar?

I thought the project would focus on those migration experiences, but as I reflected on my own story, I realised my work was exploring something deeper. As a Torres Strait Islander woman, I found myself reflecting on my heritage, my family, my connection to place and what home means beyond geography. At the same time, I was listening to women whose experiences were very different from mine. Some have migrated, some have been displaced, and some are navigating questions of identity and belonging. Yet we kept returning to the same theme: everyone is searching for a place where they can be completely themselves and know they belong.

That is why home became the heart of this work. It gave us a way to honour both our unique stories and the things that connect us all.

Some of the stories in *Mudh* carry hurt and hardship. Others speak of joy and renewal. Together, they create a rich picture of what it means to find your place in the world.

The process has been emotional at times, but it has also been incredibly healing. I have watched women support one another, listen deeply and build genuine friendships across cultures. What emerged was a strong sense of sisterhood.

Many people who are underrepresented in society rarely get the opportunity to tell their stories in their own way. Through *Mudh*, these women have found a space where their voices matter. Every story, every movement and every moment was created by the generosity of women who trusted us with parts of themselves.

What you will experience at Bina Parkland is far richer than my first idea. Over 18 months, these women have shaped it into a powerful collective work.

The work speaks about belonging, displacement, housing insecurity, resilience and identity, but underneath all of that, it speaks about our shared humanity. The stories within *Mudh* remind us that we are often more alike than we are different.

Throughout the work, we acknowledge that life can leave us with scars but our scars do not diminish us; they help shape who we become. Woven throughout *Mudh* is the Japanese art of kintsugi, in which broken pottery is repaired with gold. Rather than hiding the cracks, they become part of the object’s beauty. I think there is something powerful in that idea. Our scars tell stories of survival and strength.

My hope is that you will see pieces of your own story in the performance and feel the healing and unity within the work. There is beauty in our imperfections and strength in our differences. I wish for you to leave here celebrating your story and the stories of others and realise that community becomes stronger when we truly see and listen to one another.



Production Credits

Choreographer & Lead Creative
Sonya Stephen

Assistant Producer
& Assistant Choreographer
Isha Sharvani

Production Manager
& Lighting Designer
Peter Young

Production Supplier and Crew
Icon AV

Marketing Strategist
Rachel Audino

Photographer & Videographer
Edify Media

Lead Producer
Janine Oxenham

Sound Designer
& Music Composer
Andy O'Neil

Stage Manager
Emma Hodson

Publicist
Dixie Battersby

Mentors
Annette Carmichael – Sonya Stephen
BlakDance – Janine Oxenham & Isha Sharvani

Performers

Core Team
Aki Sato-Johnson
Catherine Antulov
Claudia Alessi
Hemamalini Vijay
Isha Sharvani
MJ Anderson-Hyde
Stella Mara
Toni Moran

Community Participants
Aggie Caracciolo
Ankita Ghunawat
Annette Wiguna
Beatrice Stotzer
Caroline Edwards
Clare O'Sullivan
Clarice Yuen
Ellen Kang
Georgia Eleni Douvartzidis
Hannah Lucas
Jordan Galliott
Kandy Fabreo Montelongo
Kathleen Szalay
Maija Raittinen
Melissa Fabreo Montelongo
Sahaja Springer
Sophia Bowden
Young Eun Choi



About Sonya

Sonya Stephen is a creative movement artist and cultural specialist who advocates for healing through dance. Trained with the Commonwealth Society of Teachers of Dancing and NAISDA (1990–93), she brings together technical excellence, cultural respect and community empowerment. She believes that everyone has a story to tell, and that creative movement can foster awareness, understanding, courage, strength, purpose, reconciliation, voice and healing.

Notable works include:

Kulap Vine Project and *Luneg* (Thursday Island), community-driven contemporary cultural performances.

Collaborations with Annette Carmichael, including *Chorus*, addressing violence, and *The Stars Descend*, responding to climate action.

Her socially engaged choreography has explored Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, the Stolen Generations and the legacy of Eddie Koiki Mabo. *Bullying is Not Our Culture* won Best Performance and Best Choreography at the 2019 Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara competition. In 1998, she also worked with the Cairns Indigenous Deaf Dance Group.

Across Australia, Sonya's practice promotes reconciliation, healing and intergenerational connection through movement.





About Locale

Mudh is the first full-length presentation to emerge from Locale, a STRUT Dance initiative grounded in Community Cultural Development.

In 2023, following STRUT's decade of successful site-responsive performances in Boorloo and Annette Carmichael's large-scale regional work *The Stars Descend*, we met with Annette to ask a simple question: what's next?

A nationally recognised leader in creating contemporary performance with regional communities, Annette has developed methods that place relationships, place and participation at the centre of the artistic process. Through our conversations, a new idea began to form: rather than bringing the city to the regions, what if Locale brought this deeply developed knowledge from regional Australia into the city?

Locale expands the idea of "site" beyond architecture. It considers cultural history, the people who live there and the activities that shape a place. The program supports artists, local governments, organisations and communities to work together through creative practice, creating opportunities for artists to engage with people beyond traditional arts settings.

This also shifted how we think about the relationship between art and audiences. Not every project needs to begin in a theatre, gallery or rehearsal studio. Sometimes it begins with a conversation, a workshop or an idea that needs time to develop. Sometimes the most meaningful part of a project is not simply the finished work, but the relationships and connections that form along the way.

So, in 2025 with the support of the Minderoo Foundation, Locale launched. Twenty artists from across WA took part in a three-part professional development series with Annette, developing skills to take their practice beyond traditional arts spaces and work with communities in the places where they live. Three artists were then supported to pilot new projects: Giorgia Schijf in the City of Belmont, Mackenzie Brown in the City of Fremantle and Sonya Stephen in the City of Stirling.

Sonya began developing *Mudh* through workshops across The City of Stirling, inviting women to connect through creativity, explore movement and consider what home means to them. She also led sessions through Edmund Rice Centre WA, MercyCare and Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Services. The process culminated in a community showing at Nollamara Community Centre, offering an early glimpse of what *Mudh* could become.

In 2026, Sonya and *Mudh* were selected to continue developing the project. Over 18 months, *Mudh* has grown through its engagement with women across Perth, creating space for people who may not traditionally see themselves reflected in contemporary dance, or feel that the arts are a space for them. This performance is not an isolated event, but the next stage of a process already shaped by relationships, stories and shared experience. As *Mudh* continues to grow, tonight is an invitation for a wider community — including you — to become part of that journey.

Thank you's

Sonya Stephen
Thank you to STRUT for giving me this opportunity, providing me the time to develop my skills and enrich my gift. Respect is very important to me. Trust is something that takes time to build, but with STRUT it developed naturally because they genuinely listened and cared.

I am incredibly grateful to Annette Carmichael for sharing her skills and knowledge with me, for always supporting my work and helping me grow. I'm very appreciative of her intuition and care, her compassion for community is so inspiring.

Thank you to Claudia Alessi for generously sharing her skills with the group and her care in guiding us all, and providing us with her beautiful studio at The Chapel Space.

To Edmund Rice and MercyCare of Mirrabooka – thank you for allowing me to connect with your women.

With love to my family for their prayers and support.

To the women of *Mudh*, thank you for your heart, soul and spirit – without you I have no *Mudh*.

STRUT Dance
Locale was truly made possible thanks to Georgia Malone, who believed in our dream and then dreamt alongside us. Thanks to her work at Minderoo, and because of her encouragement and trust, we fully allowed ourselves to imagine Locale becoming a reality.

We are incredibly grateful to the entire City of Stirling staff who have all been so generous and supportive of *Mudh* throughout the last 18 months, with a special thank you to Julie, Rebecca, Sandra and Erika, and in particular Koby for looking after us so well in the last few weeks.

A heartfelt thanks to Dirty Clean Food for providing nutritional goodness to the performers throughout the final stages of the process.

About STRUT Dance

STRUT Dance is a choreographic centre based in Boorloo/Perth. We support independent dance artists to make work, take risks, build community and keep dancing here in Western Australia.

Our membership model makes us unique among other dance organisations. For more than 20 years, STRUT has supported members and dance artists at every career stage, providing the training, opportunities and belief they need to build ambitious, creative lives.

We are a home for dance in many forms: a place for artists testing new ideas, recent graduates finding their way into a lifelong practice, experienced makers asking what comes next, and community members discovering what movement can bring into their lives.

At STRUT, we do not hold a singular artistic vision, a house style, or a prescribed idea of what dance should look like and whose stories it should tell. We are an organisation without walls, responding to new possibilities and the emerging directions of those who create, perform, and engage with movement. This keeps us nimble, working across different locations and taking dance into unexpected spaces.

If you feel inspired by what you've seen of *Mudh*, we run beginner classes for anyone wanting to move in a low-pressure environment. If you want to know more about these classes or any of our other programs and offerings, head to strutdance.org.au.

Mudh is presented by STRUT Dance as part of the Locale project, supported by the Minderoo Foundation and the City of Stirling, the WA Government, and the Federal Government through Creative Australia, its arts and funding advisory body.



Program photos by Edify Media