



Hello my name is Michelle Urquhart.

I have been involved with the Royal South Street Eisteddfod Calisthenics Competitions in many different facets over the last 50 years, having been a Competitor, a Mother, an Adjudicator, and a Volunteer in that time.

I started the sport at 5 years of age with St Mark's Girls' Gymnasium, moving a few years later onto Clifton Calisthenics College, where I then enjoyed competing at Royal South Street.

Initially, Civic Hall was the venue of the Eisteddfod when I was a younger competitor with Clifton, which holds such wonderful memories. Back in those days, the Championship section of all age groups was held within the same week.

In the year of 1980, when I was performing as a Championship Senior, we started our competition for the very first time on a Friday night at the new venue of Her Majesty's Theatre, returning on Saturday morning to Civic Hall. We were all horrified to be performing at Her Majesty's, as this was not our South Street experience as we knew it!

How times have changed and how much we love the history and the atmosphere that is experienced in Her Majesty's these days! Our competitors love performing in the beautiful historic theatre, as well as enjoying a fun overnight stay with teammates in Ballarat.

As a Mother, my daughters only ever experienced performing at Her Majesty's Theatre from Tinies right through to Seniors, with Regent Calisthenics College. So many fabulous memories were made for them for over 25 years of their lives, committed to a high standard of Calisthenics, enjoying so much fun in the dressing rooms and then nervous energy in the Green room, before stepping onto the magnificent stage.

My first experience as an Adjudicator at Royal South Street was over 20 years ago. I have been adjudicating for 36 years and love this part of my Calisthenics journey. The honour of being invited to adjudicate at Royal South Street was just as exciting as being a performer! This was the pinnacle of what you aspired to when starting the cadet course and moving through the accreditation levels... to at last sit in that coveted chair and get your turn!

The seat in the extended balcony is of course the best seat in the house and the best position to adjudicate in any venue we attend. It's just magic when the lights go down and the competitors enter the stage, it takes your breath away and you feel so included in their performance. The atmosphere is electric!

Adding to my experiences above, I have also played a small part as a volunteer at RSS. On the weekend of 18th/19th October 2014, there was a request for volunteers to help as ushers, as they were quite understaffed for the weekend.

I volunteer frequently in the Melbourne Metropolitan competitions and although holding a VIP Calisthenic ticket in the Dress Circle at Her Majesty's, it was an easy choice to offer my assistance. It was a wonderful experience to meet so many passionate others who love their theatre and the excitement each genre of the Eisteddfod brings to Ballarat.

In summing up... The whole Eisteddfod is a partnership of so many generations who offer their goodwill and support to so many performing artists. It has played a huge role in my life and I treasure my memories of so many years involved at Royal South Street and look forward to the future with this wonderful establishment.

Thank you!