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Dancing back the years

Aged care residents taking centre stage for production

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AS a member of the Apostolic Church, dancing was taboo for 91-year-old Kevin Mischke.

Now he will join four other residents from Tabeel Aged Care in Laidley in taking part in a professional performance piece due for production in 2019.

If Only I Could... explores the role of dance in our lives, no matter the age of the performer, and will involve residents from two aged care centres sharing the stage with contemporary dancers in a groundbreaking collaboration.

The production is the brainchild of internationally acclaimed theatre director Angela Chaplin, who secured Arts Queensland funding for the creative research workshops.

She previously worked with a group of Tabeel residents to explore dancing and memory in a project called *All The Dancing I Have Known*, which led to the latest production.

Resident Mr Mischke said the dancing was great fun.

"We belonged to the Apostolic Church ... and they don't believe in dancing because it could be leading to further evils among younger people," he said.

"I'm past doing all the evils, so now I can dance.

"The movements they do are marvellous. I think it's

keeping me young."

Fellow resident Val Peters loved attending country dances as a youngster.

"I am absolutely enjoying it. The camaraderie is great," Mrs Peters said.

"I've never done anything like this before, I didn't think I could. I get enjoyment and fulfilment to see the young dancers - they are so good and it's an eye-opener. I have a wonderful dance partner."

Tabeel service manager Judy Bannerman said residents had been rehearsing twice a week for the past three weeks.

"The dancers have visited residents at their homes at Tabeel many times, spending time with them and getting to know each other," Mrs Bannerman said.

"It shows you are never too old to rise to a challenge, to try something new or re-explore something you loved. No matter what situation you find yourself in, dance manifests the same joy, the same liveliness that it always did.

"They're having fun, there's a lot of laughter and it's wonderful to see new friendships being formed."

The dancers performed a rehearsed show on Saturday at the Judith Wright Centre of Creative Arts in Brisbane, watched by Tabeel staff, family and friends.



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IN TIME: Bradley Chatfield and Tabeel Aged Care resident Val Peters pose at the Judith Wright Centre in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane. They will share the stage in *If Only I Could...* a professional performance piece due for production in 2019.
PHOTO: CLAUDIA BAXTER