

ROYAL  
ACADEMY  
OF  
DANCE

*Focus on*  
**Exams**

Issue 2 2023



**Filmed exams updates**

Ballet after a brain  
haemorrhage

Rambert Grades

**FREED**  
OF LONDON



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# Welcome

## Welcome to *Focus on Exams*

I'm very pleased to announce that we are on course to deliver nearly 200,000 exams globally this year, of which, 70,000 are via video. This is a remarkable achievement of which we are hugely proud, and shows that even as the pandemic subsides, there is still a demand for filmed examinations. And so, I'd like to kick off this issue with a big thank you to all our staff and examiners who have worked so hard to get us to this point.

After three and a half years, I am sad to announce that I will be leaving the Royal Academy of Dance and the role of Director of Examinations and Responsible Officer to Ofqual and SQA Accreditation.

We have started the recruitment process for the Director of Examinations role and in the short term, we will be looking to appoint an Interim Director of Examinations to ensure a smooth transition over the next few months.

In this edition, you'll find our usual updates and reminders for filmed and face-to-face exams along with articles on the ordeal faced by one student studying ballet after a brain haemorrhage, and exam candidates' surprise bumping into Dame Darcey Bussell at RAD headquarters.

Also featured:

- **Updates and reminders** – specifications, reminders for filmed exams
- **Charge required** for late certificate and medal requests
- **Registration inbox** no longer in use
- **Certificate delivery** address on exam entry

Have a great summer!

Stay safe, and with my best wishes for the future.

**James Stockdale**  
**Director of Examinations**





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## Focus on Exams Issue 2 2023


Examinations Department  
188 York Road  
London SW11 3JZ  
United Kingdom

tel: +44 (0)20 7326 8073  
[exams@rad.org.uk](mailto:exams@rad.org.uk)

[www.royalacademyofdance.org/  
examinations](http://www.royalacademyofdance.org/examinations)  
[www.royalacademyofdance.org](http://www.royalacademyofdance.org)  
[www.radenterprises.co.uk](http://www.radenterprises.co.uk)

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Editor: Mohamed Jama  
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# Reminders and updates

## Specifications

The updated 2023 specifications are currently being updated and will be available shortly at this link [online](#). There are a handful of updates, and these are highlighted for ease.

### Recorded music with adjustment to tempo – Graded examinations

Where candidates are taking their Graded exams in an RAD Approved Venue (RAV), and they wish to take them to music where the tempo has been adjusted, they should contact their local office in the first instance to check that this will be possible.

Teachers should remember that if they adjust the music for their candidates, who are attending the RAV, they will need to provide the adjusted music and include this information as a note in their entry.

**Recorded music with an adjusted tempo can only be facilitated with a full set of candidates from the same school.** Contact your office for further details.

A reminder that if adjustments are made, the speed should be appropriate for the dynamics of the settings. The pitch of the music should not be affected and no more than 5% slower or faster is recommended.

### Registration inbox no longer in use

– please be aware that the [registration@rad.org.uk](mailto:registration@rad.org.uk) email inbox was discontinued some time ago (see the announcement in Focus on Exams Issue 2, 2022). If you have a registration query please contact your local office, or email [exams@rad.org.uk](mailto:exams@rad.org.uk) and one of our team will get back to you.



Photo: Kirsty Hei-Lin Yeung

# Reminders and updates

## Certificates

**Charge required for late certificate & medal requests** – there will now be a charge for any requests to reprint and dispatch unreceived certificates and medal packages that are made over three months after the results were released. This is due to a 90-day tracking limit provided for all certificate packages, meaning we will not be able to locate and retrieve any package which is requested after this time.

**Certificate delivery address on exam entry** – please take care to enter the correct delivery address details on your exam entry, as this can affect the successful receipt of your certificates package.

### **Incorrect Levels on certificates**

- Solo Performance Awards for Grades 4 and 5

Certificates issued for all candidates for Solo Performance Awards for Grades 4 and 5 have been issued with the incorrect **Levels** on them. If any candidates prior to March 2023 wish to request a corrected certificate, please contact [certificates@rad.org.uk](mailto:certificates@rad.org.uk) and we will reissue these for you free of charge.

## Further reminders regarding RAD Online Exam Entries

### **Adding Notes to your Online Entry**

Remember to click the **ADD** button after adding information to the notes section of your online exam entry to save the information (pictured above).

For further assistance, please head to the [\*\*RAD Online Exams Applicant Guidelines\*\*](#) in your members' area.

### **Small Countries**

Please be advised that all countries that fall within the 'small countries' category are only able to submit filmed exam entries. We are only able to consider a live session when a minimum of two days of exams can be held.

We will shortly be introducing filmed exam fees for all small countries, and will be in touch with the teachers within these countries with further information as soon as possible.

If you have any questions regarding this, or if you are unsure if your country is within the small countries category, please email [\*\*Jo Pigeon\*\*](mailto:Jo.Pigeon@rad.org.uk) (International Examinations Officer) for more information.



## Filmed examinations

Thank you for following the filmed exam guidelines and the new instructions for 2023.

We have some gentle reminders and updates for all future filmed exams:

- Please ensure you include a full 360-degree view of the studio prior to the first exam of each day. This is a regulatory requirement and must be a full 360-degree spin showing the whole studio space, rather than a swipe from left to right/right to left.
- The **Filmed Exams Guidelines** for teachers has been updated with some additional guideline requirements that come into action from **1 August 2023**.

Please find the updated guidelines within the **Members' Area** – new additions have been highlighted within the document; we have also summarised them below:

- Processing timeline – our goal timeline for processing filmed exams.
- The use of filters, lenses and any device that distorts or changes the original image.
- Filmed exams checklist – a helpful additional resource that can be used alongside the guidelines, to ensure you meet all the requirements within your filmed exams.



Photo: Elliott Franks

# I Believe in Miracles

## I Believe in Miracles: Ballet after a Brain Haemorrhage

### Margherita Gramegna-Taylor

I had never believed in miracles and never thought that ballet would be a force that would help to reignite my spirit after a devastating condition I did not know I had and nearly took my life. I believe in miracles now.

Having discovered about five years ago that there was such a thing as 'Adult Ballet', I had been searching to find a class near me for months. One Saturday morning, the first miracle happened: I stumbled across an online advert for the Bridge Academy of Performing Arts, offering 'Adult ballet classes, Saturdays 10-11 am at The Vines, no previous experience needed, just turn up'. The venue, I realized, was only eight minutes walk from my house, so I ran upstairs, put leggings on and set off. I had never done ballet before and am not a particularly gifted dancer, but I took every available class and after a year or so, was encouraged to take the RAD Grade 1 examination. To my amazement, I was awarded a distinction - a second miracle! And I had never felt so proud.

While preparing for Grade 2, during the Covid pandemic, on the 18th of December 2020, an aneurysm ruptured in my head, and a third miracle took place: I didn't die.

I have no recollection of what happened next. My brain, I was later informed, had stopped encoding memory for several days. King's College Hospital diagnosed a Subarachnoid Haemorrhage (SAH), and a craniotomy operation was deemed necessary. I will spare you the details of the misery and despair this caused me and my family, but thankfully the extraordinary work of the neurosurgery team at King's saved my life.

After the operation, Mr Walsh, my consultant, asked me to lift my left arm higher and higher. By the third time he asked I had become alarmed: "Will I still be able to do ballet?" I asked.

To my surprise, he enquired if I was doing a Silver Swans class. It puzzled me that he would know about such classes and replied that I was studying RAD Grade 2. He explained that he knew about the RAD and reassured me I would be able to return to dancing.

Eventually, with the support of my husband and daughter, disorientated and full of trepidation, I went back to the dance studio. Although I felt hopeless at first, persevering with ballet was a crucial part of my recovery and wellbeing.

Practising the controlled movements and precise coordination of ballet gradually rebuilt my strength, flexibility, and balance. The focus and



Margherita Gramegna-Taylor  
Photo: Paula Fransham-Rees



concentration that ballet requires - memorising choreography, coordinating movements, and maintaining correct posture, were improving my memory, concentration and mental agility.

Ballet classes also provided a sense of community and support. The Bridge Academy is a passionate and brilliant group of dedicated dancers full of humanity and generosity. With kindness and professionalism, our tutor Clare Wilders, encouraged and advised me as painfully slowly, I resumed practicing.

At first, it was really challenging, I felt like Frankenstein meets the Elephant man, and shed gallons of tears. My passion was still intact, but my confidence was below zero.

At home, Sam, a fellow dancer, painstakingly practised with me, and Paula, who took these photographs, would pop in to check on my progress. A tall radiator in my entrance hall functioned as a barre and gradually I relearned grade 2.

In the early days of my recovery, my consultant said: "Passing a ballet exam after a brain hemorrhage would certainly be an achievement". So, when I received a respectable pass mark of 46, I was over the moon. I am now studying for Grade 3, steadily practising with fellow dancers Sam and Christine. Ballet means more to me than just exams. I included live ballet in my latest art installation, which is part of an upcoming project about surviving SAH and my renewed enchantment with life and beauty, of which ballet is a significant part. So many elements of ballet aided my recovery. If I could run my life like ballet, knowing the sequence of each beautiful step, how elegant life would be.

# Headquarters exams

## Candidates meet Dame Darcey Bussell DBE

Summer 2023 saw an incredibly popular RAV exam session at our London headquarters, with a record-breaking 1,300 students taking their exams during the summer term.

Students from Dancestars School in Greater London attended the RAV spring exam session, and in addition to the use of state-of-the-art studios to warm up, and a friendly, efficient on-site RAD exams team, students were absolutely delighted to meet Dame Darcey Bussell DBE, in the hallway. She graciously allowed photographs and wished a passing group a friendly “Good Luck!” as the exam bell chimed.

Dame Darcey also asked Lauren, Grace, and Olivia (pictured) how their RAD Grade 4 exam went. When they replied, “We were nervous at first, but we relaxed after pliés and remembered to smile”, she responded, “ALWAYS keep smiling!”



Dancestars students: Lauren, Grace & Olivia pictured with Dame Darcey Bussell.

What an incredible experience that these students will treasure forever! They are already looking forward to taking their next RAD exam.

# Pamela Howard Examinations Bursary

One of our RAD teachers, Ms Pamela Howard, sadly passed away in July 2021 and a bursary in her memory has been set up to help deserving candidates toward the cost of their exam.

Teachers should submit 150 words to explain why their candidates deserve the bursary, with applications open twice a year, Winter and Summer. For more information on how to apply, please contact **Mo Jama** or visit our **website**.



Bursary recipient,  
Nanami

## Pamela Howard Examinations Bursary Legacy

Nanami from Ghana on receiving the bursary in the spring round.

“I would like to say thank you so much for giving me this chance, so that I could do the RAD Intermediate Foundation examination. My parents work very hard but because they earn in Ghana cedi. It makes it very difficult for them to pay in dollars or pounds equivalent fees. I have 4 siblings, so it is hard for them, but they always try to give us the best things available. The last time I did an RAD exam was in 2020 for Grade 2 and that was an award exam. I started ballet late and some of the other students used to tell me that I was too old to start so being able to prove myself was a very good experience for me.

Once again, thank you very much for giving dancers like me a chance like this!”

# Panel of Examiners



Photo: Mohamed Jama

## Former examiners' reunion – UK

The annual former examiners' reunion held took place on 18 May at RAD headquarters. It was lovely to see many former examiners together along with current RAD colleagues including Chief Executive, Tim Arthur, Mariko Keith, Brenda Strong, Martin Cleave, Jennifer Hale and former colleagues Sir Luke Rittner KBE, and Sara-Jane Mulryan.

David Jays (editor of *Dance Gazette* and host of *Why Dance Matters* Podcast) also attended the event, which was organised by former examiner Barbara Peters BEM FRAD.

Commemorative plaques were presented to recently retired examiners, Wendy Arshamian, and Helen Hillard.

The former examiners in attendance were:

Sandy Anderton, Wendy Arshamian, Gillian Caplan, Judy Craven, Dr Susan Danby FRAD, Helen Delve, Susan Dukes, Frances Flower, Helen Hillard, Valerie Hitchen FRAD, Margarita McGaire, Cynthia O'Dunlaing FRAD, Barbara Peters BEM FRAD, Zoe Plowman, Noel Proven, Carolyn Sams, Vivienne Saxton, Clare Thomas, and Denise Winmill.

## Plaque presentation – Hong Kong

We are pleased to announce that a small celebration took place in April 2023 for former examiner, Sylvia Wu who retired from the panel in 2017. The presentation was primarily delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Sylvia celebrated with current Hong Kong-based examiners Ulian Chun, Agnes Huang, Vivian Kwok, Tania Tang, and Jan Pang, the RAD Operations Manager for Hong Kong, China and Macau.

## Recruitment and training

The next examiner training programme will be held at the RAD headquarters during October/ November 2023. This completes the recruitment campaign started at the end of 2019, which was slowed down considerably due to the pandemic.

We are not accepting any new examiner applications at present and do not anticipate a further recruitment campaign until the second half of 2024 the earliest.

For further information on application guidelines and the training process, please email [examinerrecruitment@rad.org.uk](mailto:examinerrecruitment@rad.org.uk)



Sylvia Wu

# Announcements

## Gerard Charles announcement

Gerard Charles will sadly be leaving us on 1 September. Gerard has led the Artistic Team since 2018 and I'm sure you'll all want to join me in thanking him for his wonderful service to the RAD, particularly through the immensely challenging period of successive lockdowns throughout the Covid-19 epidemic. We wish him a long and very happy retirement.

We are currently in the process of looking for his successor but in the meantime, we can also announce that our former Artistic Director, Lynn Wallis, has very kindly agreed to take over Gerard's role as producer for this year's Margot Fonteyn International Ballet Competition.

## Rambert Grades Launch in London

Following a successful period in Australia, the Royal Academy of Dance and Rambert Grades are delighted to be expanding their collaboration globally. RAD Registered Teachers will be offered to join Rambert Grades – a progressive and inclusive contemporary dance syllabus. This collaboration brings together two world-leading dance education and training organisations with a shared passion for excellence in teaching practice and a desire to widen access to dance.

More information on this unique partnership is available in the [members' area](#).



Rambert Grades  
Photo: Nicole Guarino



## Successful Solo Seal candidates

The Solo Seal is the highest level of exam offered by the RAD. Candidates perform three solo variations and a virtuoso finale (choreographed by the candidate or their teacher), requiring a high degree of technical and expressive artistry, in front of an audience. They must achieve a minimum of 8 marks (out of 10) in every component to pass. In a typical year, no more than 20-30 candidates around the world achieve this prestigious award.

Congratulations to the following:

### Portugal

Diana Faria (June 2022)

### Australia

Samantha Wong (August 2022)

### Brazil

Ana Luisa Torres de Andrade  
(November 2022)

Ana Clara Barbosa  
(November 2022)

Renata Linhares (November 2022)

Giovanna Hellu Ferrari  
(November 2022)

### UK

Yuna Hirata (March 2023)

Aimee Williams (March 2023)

Leonardo McCorkindale  
(March 2023)

## UK Headquarters

Royal Academy of Dance  
Examinations Department  
188 York Road  
London SW11 3RZ  
exams@rad.org.uk / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8073  
www.rad.org.uk

**Queries about certificates, results or certificate replacements –**  
certificates@rad.org.uk

**Result enquiries, reasonable adjustments, special considerations, complaints, appeals**  
examscustomerservices@rad.org.uk

**Urban Strides examinations**  
urbanstrides@rad.org.uk

**Filmed examinations**  
examfilm@rad.org.uk

**Director of Examinations**  
**James Stockdale**  
jstockdale@rad.org.uk /  
t: +44 (0)20 7326 8088

**Chief Examiner**  
**Jennifer Hale**  
jhale@rad.org.uk / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8969

**Head of Examinations Operations**  
**Lauretta Bulman-Selyer**  
lbulman-selyer@rad.org.uk / t: TBC

**Examinations Customer Service Manager**  
**Suzanne Partridge**  
spartridge@rad.org.uk /  
t: +44 (0)20 7326 8936

**Examinations Registration, Results and Certification Manager**  
**Andrew Milton**  
amilton@rad.org.uk / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8055

**Examinations Results Quality Assurance Manager**  
**Lynne Bradley**  
lbradley@rad.org.uk / t: +44 (0)1608 676109

**Panel of Examiners Consultant**  
**Paula Hunt**  
phunt@rad.org.uk

**Panel of Examiners Manager**  
**Lillian Doleman**  
ldoleman@rad.org.uk

# Contacts

## Panel of Examiners Officer and PA to the Artistic Director and Chief Examiner

### Mariko Keith

mkeith@rad.org.uk / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8006

## PA to the Director of Examinations and Customer Support Officer

TBC

## Examinations Certification Officer

### Monica Camara

mcamara@rad.org.uk / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8050

## Examinations Development and Compliance Manager

TBC

## Examinations Data Processing Supervisory Officer

### Lucia Silva

lsilva@rad.org.uk / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8960

## Examinations Officer (Filmed exams)

Caz Chew / cchew@rad.org.uk

## Examinations Officer (International)

### Joanna Pigeon

jpigeon@rad.org.uk / +44 (0)20 7326 8930

## Examinations Officer (UK RAD Approved Venues and support for Special exams)

### Cecilia Matteucci

cmatteucci@rad.org.uk / +44 (0)20 7326 8909

## Examinations Operations Administrator

### Brenda Strong

bstrong@rad.org.uk / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8008

## Examinations Operations Administrator

### Mohamed Jama

mjama@rad.org.uk / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8007

## Examinations Results Administrator

### Ellen Yilma-Parmar (maternity cover)

eyparmar@rad.org.uk /  
t: +44 (0)20 7326 8966

## UK regional offices:

### London, Middlesex and UK Specials

#### Regional Manager: Carys Barbour

cbarbour@rad.org.uk / t: +44 (0)20 7326 8056

### Midlands and East of England

#### Regional Manager: Louisa Coleby

lcoleby@rad.org.uk / t: +44 (0)1386 40935

### Northern England

#### Regional Manager: Harriet Main

hmain@rad.org.uk / t: +44 (0)7780 111 907

### Northern Ireland (and Republic of Ireland)

#### Examinations Area Organiser:

#### Christine Press

cpress@rad.org.uk / t: +44 (0)7552 167846

### Scotland

#### Regional Manager: Jennifer MacFarlane

jmacfarlane@rad.org.uk /

t: +44 (0)1314 455 455

### South East England

#### Regional Manager: Sue Morice-Jones

smorice-jones@rad.org.uk /

t: +44 (0)1634 305 573

### South West England, Wales & Channel Islands

#### Regional Manager: Amy Griffiths

agriffiths@rad.org.uk /

m: +44 (0)7554 457 259

## International offices:

### Bermuda, Ghana, Jordan, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Serbia

### (and all other countries not listed below):

#### Examinations Officer (International):

#### Joanna Pigeon

jpigeon@rad.org.uk / +44 (0)20 7326 8930

### Australia & Papua New Guinea

#### Head of Department – Examinations and Regions

#### Lia Cox

lcox@rad.org.au / t: +61 413 382 271 |

au.royalacademyofdance.org

### Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and France

#### Royal Academy of Dance Asbl

#### Contact: Georgina Wood

benelux@rad.org.uk / t: +44 (0)7554457261

## **Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela**

Royal Academy of Dance Brasil Ltda  
National Director: **Maria do Carmo de Kenny**  
mckenny@royalacademyofdance.com.br /  
Tel + 55 11 3826 2498  
www.royalacademyofdance.com.br

## **Canada**

Examinations Manager: **Carolyn Jones**  
cjones@radcanada.org / t: +1 416 489 2813  
ext. 221  
exams@radcanada.org / t: +1 416 489 2813 /  
f: +1 416 489 3222  
ca.royalacademyofdance.org

## **Caribbean (Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, The Bahamas, Jamaica, St.Lucia, Barbados, Aruba)**

National Manager: **Diane Bernard**  
dianebernard@rad.org.jm /  
t/f: +1 876 755 0612

## **China**

Chief Representative RAD China:  
**Professor Ting Tina Chen**  
radchina@hotmail.com / t: 86 21 63463675 /  
f: 86 21 6513 7188  
leeandtina@hotmail.com / t: 86 21 6346 3675  
Chief Officer (RAD China): **Miss Judy Gu**  
radchina@hotmail.com / t: 86 21 63463675 /  
f: 86 21 6513 7188  
RAD Shanghai (Exams)  
Shanghai & Eastern China: **Miss Ying Wang**  
w\_y\_1957@hotmail.com / t: 86 21 62483326  
Beijing & North East China:  
**Miss Lu Sha (Rose) Xu**  
609869679@qq.com / t: 86 138 1071 7071  
http://www.rad.cn.com

## **Cyprus**

National Manager: **George Shantos**  
info@rad.com.cy / t: +357 99 477 887 /  
f: +357 24 818 351  
www.rad.com.cy

## **Germany, Austria and Switzerland**

Royal Academy of Dance® gGmbH  
Examinations Manager: **Markus Thiée**  
pruefung@royalacademyofdance.de /  
t: +49 (0)30 39 40 466 60 /  
f: +49 (0)30 39 40 466 69  
https://de.royalacademyofdance.org/

## **Greece**

The British Council  
RAD Representative: **Lilian Tentoma**  
Lilian.Tentoma@britishcouncil.gr /  
t: + 30 210 3692374 / F + 30 210 3630332

## **Hong Kong**

Hong Kong Examinations & Assessment  
Authority  
International and Professional Examinations  
Division  
RAD Representative: **Blair Yip**  
byip@hkeaa.edu.hk / t: +852 3628-8720 /  
f: +852 3628 8790  
www.hkeaa.edu.hk

## **Indonesia**

Yayasan Royal Academy of Dance Indonesia  
Examination contact: **Selvee Murugiah**  
Indonesia@rad.org.uk

## **Israel**

National Manager: **Gali Zamir**  
gali@rad.org.il / t: +972 52 3343838

## **Italy**

Royal Academy of Dance Srl  
National Director: **Manuela De Luca**  
info@raditaly.it / t: +39 0461 985 055 /  
f: +39 0461 985 054  
www.raditaly.it

## **Japan**

National Director: **Noriko Kobayashi**  
radjapan@nifty.com / t: +81 3 3987 3750 /  
f: +81 3 3987 3649

## **Malaysia and Brunei**

RAD Dancing (Malaysia) SdnBhd  
National Director: **Selvee Murugiah**  
director@raddancing.com.my /  
t / f: +6 03 2276 0052

## **Malta**

National Manager: **Sandra Mifsud**  
smifsud@rad.org.uk / t: (356) 7993 8584  
www.rad.org.mt

## **Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Panama**

Royal Academy of Dance de Mexico AC  
National Director: **Julieta Navarro**  
radmexju@prodigy.net.mx / t: +55 5360 2700  
/ f: +52 55 5373 4069

# Contacts

## New Zealand

National Director: **Bronwyn Williams**  
info@rad.org.nz / t: +64 4 382 8924  
nz.royalacademyofdance.org

## Norway, Sweden and Denmark

National Manager: **Karina Lund**  
klund@royalacademyofdance.no /  
t: +47 95920812  
www.royalacademyofdance.no

## Philippines

Examinations contact: **Georgina Wood**  
philippines@rad.org.uk

## Portugal

National Director: **Margarida Sa Fialho**  
radportugal@rad.org.pt /  
t/f: +351 21 383 1849

## Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

National Manager: **Christine Press**  
cpress@rad.org.uk / t: +353 83 165 9314

## Singapore

Royal Academy of Dance Singapore  
National Director: **Mona Lim**  
mona.lim@rad.sg / t: +65 6762 8993 /  
f: +65 6762 4031  
www.rad.sg

## South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe

Examinations Manager: **Idalina Lume**  
ilume@rad.org.za / exams@rad.org.za / t:  
+27 (0)11 887 0459  
www.rad.org.za

## South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka)

Royal Academy of Dance, South Asia  
National Manager: **Ranmali Mirchandani**  
radsouthasia@gmail.com / t: +94 777 349399

## South Korea

RAD Representative: **Hyun Joo Ham**  
hjham@radkorea.org / t: +82 10 3793 1910  
www.radkorea.org

## Spain, Andorra and Gibraltar

Royal Academy of Dance SL  
National Director: **Maria José Antón**  
info@rad.org.es / t: +34 977 34 24 89 /  
t/f: +34 977 34 19 35  
www.rad.org.es

## Taiwan

National Manager: **Shu-Yu Lin**  
linshuyu82@hotmail.com /  
t: +886 22 871 5615 / f: +886 22 874 7783  
www.rad.org.tw

## Thailand

RAD Dancing (Thailand) Co Ltd  
National Director: **Glenn van der Hoff**  
info@radthailand.org / t: +6653 274841 /  
m: +668 51564 562  
www.radthailand.org

## Turkey

Examinations contact: **Georgina Wood**  
turkey@rad.org.uk

## United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman

Examinations Contact: **Joanna Pigeon**  
uae@rad.org.uk

## United States of America

National Director: **Patti Ashby**  
info@radusa.org / t: +1 414 747 9060 /  
f: +1 414 747 9062  
www.radusa.org



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Photo: Brian Worth

## Live on through a legacy...

At the RAD, we are nothing without you, our examiners. You have touched countless lives and inspired so many through your passion and your commitment to dance. But, as a charity, we still have lots of work to do to reach communities and people who would never have the opportunity to experience the joy that it brings.

If you'd like to ensure we can inspire the next generation of dancers, please consider remembering the RAD in your will. A donation in the form of a legacy would mean so much and would allow us to continue to build on the huge contribution that you have already made to the world of dance.

To find out more, please get in touch at [development@rad.org.uk](mailto:development@rad.org.uk).

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