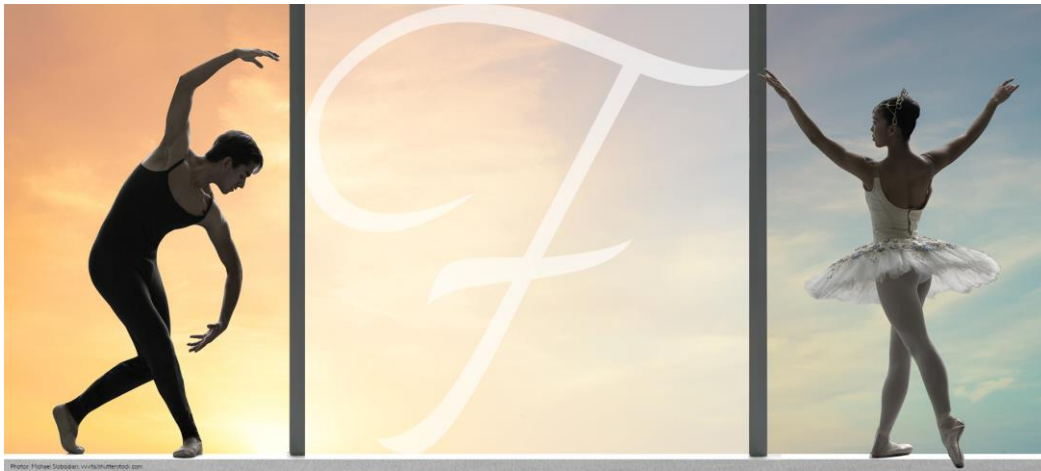


## Dame Darcey Bussell announces finalists for The Fonteyn, RAD's international ballet competition, as it goes online for the first time



Photos: Michael Slobodian; vvvita/shutterstock.com

- 15 young dancers from 5 countries have been announced as finalists in The Margot Fonteyn International Ballet Competition, RAD's flagship event (previously named the Genée).
- An esteemed judging panel, led by RAD President Dame Darcey Bussell, selected the 15 dancers from 97 candidates representing 16 countries.
- The Academy has adapted the format for 2021 to offer online coaching and judging to ensure the widest possible access, following a challenging year for young dancers across the world. This year is also particularly significant for the competition, as the RAD marks 90 years since its inception.
- The RAD is truly inspired by the dedication of the candidates taking part and is thrilled that this year's competition has reached more dancers than ever before.
- The final, hosted by Dame Darcey and RAD Artistic Director Gerard Charles, takes place entirely online for the first time on Thursday 9 September at 7.30pm BST, with members of the public able to purchase tickets to watch. Ticket holders will have the opportunity to watch the online event on demand until 19 September 2021. For further information and to register to watch visit: [www.royalacademyofdance.org/fonteyn2021](http://www.royalacademyofdance.org/fonteyn2021)
- [Watch Dame Darcey Bussell announce the finalists.](#)

**12 July 2021: The Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) today announced the 15 dancers who will compete in the final of The Margot Fonteyn International Ballet Competition.** This is the first time RAD's flagship event, previously named the Genée, has taken place under its new name. This year will be especially significant as the RAD has seen a record number of applicants, thanks to the new competition format intended to widen access to this prestigious event. 2021 also marks 90 years since the

competition was created, it was founded in 1931 and has taken place almost every year since.

An esteemed judging panel comprised of RAD President Dame Darcey Bussell, Artistic Director and CEO of Scottish Ballet Christopher Hampson and former Artistic Director of Birmingham Royal Ballet Sir David Bintley selected the finalists from a pool of 97 dancers from 16 countries. The 15 finalists will now go on to learn a commissioned solo choreographed by Ashley Page, former Artistic Director of Scottish Ballet, which they will perform with a classical solo at the final on Thursday 9 September. Members of the public are invited to watch this historic final from wherever they are in the world, as it takes place entirely online for the first time in the competition's history.

**Announcing the finalists Dame Darcey Bussell said:** *“We have been so inspired to see the passion of young dancers across the world, who have continued to work so hard and share their love for ballet, despite such a challenging year. Myself and my fellow judges, Christopher Hampson and Sir David Bintley, hugely enjoyed watching the talent, technique and variety displayed by all 97 candidates who entered the final stage of the first online Fonteyn competition. It gives me enormous pleasure to announce the finalists for The Margot Fonteyn International Ballet Competition 2021, and I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to everyone who took part.”*

**The finalists for the 2021 competition are:**

**Mexican dancer Sebastian Aguiñaga**, trained by RAD Teacher Victoria Treviño

**Australian dancer Mia Atkinson**, trained by RAD Teacher Catherine Edwards

**British dancer Luke Blair**, trained by Dance Faculty of Tring Park School for the Performing Arts

**Australian dancer Christian Carlo-Stella**, trained by RAD Teachers Hilary Kaplan and Archibald McKenzie, and English National Ballet School

**British dancer Olivia Chang Clarke**, trained by RAD Teacher Denise Whiteman

**South African dancer Tayla De Bie**, trained by RAD Teacher Natasha Ireland

**British dancer Poppy Frankel**, trained by Vanessa Palmer

**Australian dancer Milei Lee**, trained by RAD Teacher Liane McRae

**British dancer Hannah Martin**, trained by RAD Teacher Mary Goodhew

**New Zealand dancer Alice McArthur**, trained by Auckland Academy of Dance

**South African dancer Paige McElligott**, trained by RAD Teacher Vanessa Eborall

**South African dancer Lizé Mentz**, trained by RAD Teacher Debra Colleen Gush

**Australian dancer Amber Mitchell-Knight**, trained by RAD Teacher Susan Sargison

**Australian dancer Amelia Soh**, trained by RAD Teachers Jasmin Bobyk, Paris Bobyk and Celine Bobyk

**British dancer Edward Truelove**, trained by Dance Faculty of Tring Park School for the Performing Arts

The RAD also announced that the Choreographic Award was won by **Olivia Chang Clarke**. The judges felt that her solo *Rain of tears* (choreographed by herself) demonstrated the highest standard of choreography within the *Dancer's Own* category.

The dedication and passion shown by all of the dancers who have taken part in the competition to date has been inspiring. In response to the pandemic, but also in a bid to widen access to the competition, The Fonteyn has taken place online this year allowing more applicants than ever before. In the early stages of the competition, the RAD delivered one to one online coaching for 114 dancers from 18 countries, who worked on two solos. The coaches, some of the leading professionals in dance today, included former Royal Ballet Principals Ed Watson and Leanne Benjamin, from Rambert, Miguel Altunaga and Amber Scott, Principal with The Australian Ballet. 75% of candidates said that the competition being online helped them to participate in this rich educational opportunity.

The RAD remains committed to providing opportunities to aspiring young dancers at this challenging time for the arts industry. In addition to competing for medals and prize money to further their training, all finalists' solos will be sent to Artistic Directors of leading companies across the world, providing a potentially crucial stepping stone in their career path. The competition has long produced alumni who have gone onto careers the world's leading companies, including Francesca Hayward, Xander Parish, Mlindi Kulashe, Stella Abrera, Amber Scott and Steven McRae, to name a few.

This year, the RAD invites audiences from across the world to watch the final online as dancers compete for the coveted gold, silver and bronze medals. The judges for the final are Dame Darcey Bussell, Director of The Royal Ballet Kevin O'Hare, Christopher Hampson and Irek Mukhamedov, Ballet Master, Opera Paris Ballet. The final takes place on Thursday 9 September at 7.30pm BST, and ticket holders can watch the event on demand until 19 September 2021. Hosted by Dame Darcey Bussell and RAD Artistic Director Gerard Charles, this special online event will also provide a unique insight behind the scenes with interviews with famed dancers such as Leanne Benjamin, Dame Monica Mason and a rare glimpse into the competition process.

To find out more and to book tickets visit [www.royalacademofdance.org/fonteyn2021](http://www.royalacademofdance.org/fonteyn2021)

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Images available from previous competitions and artwork available to download [here](#)  
Password 'fonteyn'

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## **Notes to Editors**

### **About the Royal Academy of Dance**

Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) is one of the most influential dance education and training organisations in the world with a strong global membership in 85 countries.

Established in 1920 to improve standards and re-invigorate dance training, the RAD helps and encourages its teachers to perfect their teaching skills and pass on this knowledge to their students. There are currently over 1,000 students in full-time or part-time teacher training programmes with the RAD and each year the examination syllabus is taught to thousands of young people worldwide, with around a quarter of a million pupils per year going on to take RAD exams.

### **About The Margot Fonteyn International Ballet Competition**

The Fonteyn, formerly known as the Genée, is one of the most prestigious ballet competitions in the world, attracting the finest young dancers trained in the RAD syllabus, from around the globe. The Fonteyn is a unique competition that champions learning, growth and self-belief. It is open to dancers aged 15-19 that have passed the RAD Intermediate and Advanced 2 examinations in Classical Ballet with distinction. Each year, dancers from around the world enter the competition to partake in coaching on three different solos: a 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century variation, a piece choreographed specifically for the candidate, either by their teacher, a friend or themselves, and finally a solo by that year's Commissioned Choreographer. The competition started in 1931, when the Adeline Genée Gold Medal was awarded to Felicity Garratt. Other medals were later added: the silver (1934), bronze (1956), and gold and silver for male dancers (1938). The Genée has taken place almost every year since, and is now a truly global event. In 2002 the RAD took the decision to hold the competition outside London for the first time, taking it to Australia where Sydney Opera House played host to a record number of candidates. 2021 is the first time the competition will take place solely online, with the format for 2022 and beyond, under review.

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