

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Genée International Ballet Competition 2019 Medallists Announced

Darrion Sellman from the USA & Mia Zanardo from Australia awarded coveted gold medals at one of the world's most prestigious dance events



Medallists and judges 2019. Image: Michael Slobodian

The Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) is pleased to announce the medallists of the prestigious Genée International Ballet Competition 2019, held at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts in Toronto on 29 August. After a week of intensive coaching from world-renowned teachers and choreographers, the competition final saw the coveted gold medal awarded to **Darrion Sellman**, aged 15 from the USA, trained by Andrea Paris-Guiterrez and Jose Carayol, and **Mia Zanardo**, aged 15 from Australia, trained by Hilary Kaplan and Archibald McKenzie. Silver medals were awarded to Malaysian dancer **Julian Wen-Sheng Gan**, aged 17, trained by Serena Tan Suet Leng, and Australian dancer **Paloma Hendry-Hodsdon**, aged 17, trained by Shirley Rogers. **Jessica Templeton** aged 16 from the UK, trained by Faculty of Tring Park School was awarded a bronze medal. **Julian Wen-Sheng Gan** was also presented with the Margot Fonteyn Audience Choice Award, and the Choreographic Award for best Dancer's Own variation was awarded to **Ashton Parker** from South Africa. The judges felt that her solo *Alcoba Azul*, choreographed by Indra Reinholde demonstrated the best choreography.

Hosted by a different country each year, the Genée returned to Toronto for the first time since 2008 with week-long events attracting 62 of the world's finest young dancers from 13 different nationalities, aged 15 -19 years old. The competition saw finalists perform three solos including never-before seen pieces by Italian-Canadian choreographer **Gioconda-Barbuto**, who was commissioned by RAD to create two variations (one for male candidates and one for female candidates) for the competition. The young dancers were judged by **Karen Kain**, Artistic Director of The National Ballet of Canada, **Dame Monica Mason DBE**, former Director of The Royal Ballet, **Mikko Nissinen**, Artistic

Director of Boston Ballet and **Magdalena Popa**, Principal Artistic Coach of The National Ballet of Canada.

The final included a special excerpt from *The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude*, performed by 5 artists from The National Ballet of Canada. The competition was also attended by one of the official Ambassadors for Genée 2019, **Donald Thom** (first soloist, National Ballet of Canada) Donald Thom was a finalist at the Genée International Ballet Competition in 2010, when the competition was held in London.

The Genée final also marked a special celebration of Karen Kain, as she was presented with the RAD's highest accolade, the Queen Elizabeth II Coronation Award. Karen Kain is the first Canadian to be awarded this honour, and this marked the first time that it was bestowed outside of the UK. The RAD chose to recognise Karen Kain in celebration of her 50 years with The National Ballet of Canada, along with her incredible contribution to the world of ballet, both as a renowned dancer and one of the most distinguished leaders in dance today.

The Genée, now in its 88th year, began in 1931 to celebrate the world's most talented young performers. Earlier this year, the RAD announced that as of 2020 the competition will be renamed to celebrate its longest-serving President, Dame Margot Fonteyn, who would have turned 100 years old in 2019. The Margot Fonteyn International Ballet Competition will be hosted in the UK to coincide with the Academy's centenary. The year 2020 also marks the first time that the competition will be held at London's Royal Opera House, offering aspiring young dancers the chance to perform on one of the world's most famous stages.

The RAD is proud to be working with a number of partners to make this year's Genée happen. These include The National Ballet of Canada, Harlequin Floors, Mondor, The Shepherd Group, McCarthy Tetrault and the Dame Margot Fonteyn Scholarship Fund. You can see more details about our full list of sponsors and supporters [here](#).

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About the Genée International Ballet Competition

Known simply as 'the Genée', it 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. Candidates receive a unique opportunity to work with renowned choreographers and teachers for five days before performing at the semi-finals, and then the final, where they compete for a range of medals. 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. Following that success, the Genée is now hosted in a different country each year.

About the Royal Academy of Dance

With approximately 13,000 members in 89 countries, the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) is one of the largest and most influential dance education and training organisations in the world. Established in

1920 to improve standards and re-invigorate dance training, the Academy 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 Academy and each year the examination syllabus is taught to thousands of young people worldwide, with approaching a quarter of a million pupils per year going on to take RAD exams.