

PRESS RELEASE

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THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE'S PRESTIGIOUS BALLET COMPETITION RETURNS TO THE UK



2018 Genée silver medallist Basil James (now a student at The Royal Ballet School)

THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE PRESENTS

THE MARGOT FONTEYN INTERNATIONAL BALLET COMPETITION

AT THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

SEPTEMBER 2020

- One of the world's most prestigious ballet competitions will return to the UK in 2020 for the first time in five years. The competition has never been held at the Royal Opera House before
- The Royal Academy of Dance has announced the name change from the Genée International Ballet Competition to the Margot Fonteyn International Ballet Competition, effective from 2020, to mark Fonteyn's 100th birthday this week
- RAD President Dame Darcey Bussell DBE will chair the international jury for the competition
- The competition in 2020 will be a highlight of the RAD's 100th birthday celebrations

The Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) is renaming its prestigious, annual ballet competition to celebrate its longest-serving President, Dame Margot Fonteyn, who would have turned 100 years old this week. The competition will be hosted in the UK for the first time in five years to coincide with the Academy's centenary. 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.

Margot Fonteyn is regarded as the greatest ballet dancer of her generation. As President of the RAD she was instrumental in shaping the Academy's international expansion. In 1961, Fonteyn invited Rudolf Nureyev to perform at an RAD gala, his first ever London performance after his defection, leading to the pair's legendary partnership, which propelled them to iconic status worldwide.

Formerly known as the Genée after the Royal Academy of Dance's first ever President, the competition began in 1931 to celebrate the world's most talented young performers. The RAD will continue to honour its first president with the Adeline Genée gold medal for the best dancer.

Dancers aged 15 - 19 years old who have trained in the RAD syllabus will have the unique opportunity to work with world-renowned choreographers and teachers for five days at the Royal Ballet School, before performing at the semi-finals, and then at the final at the Royal Opera House. The RAD acknowledges with gratitude the support of the Dame Margot Fonteyn Scholarship Fund, the only charity bearing her name, which will provide significant additional support to the competition to mark the name change. The Fund also continues its ongoing support of candidates at the competition, pledging an increased number of bursaries per annum for the next five years, and continuing to present the audience choice award in Dame Margot's name.

Past Genée medallists have gone on to work for some of the great ballet companies around the world. Genée medallists who currently work for The Royal Ballet include Steven McRae, Alexander Campbell, Lauren Cuthbertson and Francesca Hayward.

Dame Darcey Bussell DBE, President of the Royal Academy of Dance, said:

"It's an honour to pay tribute to one of the world's greatest ever ballet dancers and the longest serving President of the RAD, in this way. By renaming the competition after Margot, we want to encourage today's young dancers to emulate the qualities that she was famous for.

Margot had the magical ability to communicate to her audience through her story telling and natural lyricism, making every member of the audience feel completely engaged. She had wonderful musicality, a purity of line and an unflinching dedication and love of her art. I was fortunate enough to be coached by Margot in Swan Lake at the beginning of my career, something I will never forget. As we approach the Academy's centenary, I don't think there is an artist whose name will inspire more students of ballet in the next century, than that of Dame Margot Fonteyn, Prima Ballerina Assoluta."

The RAD will host the semi-finals and final at the Royal Opera House. Semi-finals will take place 2 – 3 September 2020 in the new Linbury Theatre, and the Final will take place on Saturday 5 September 2020 on the ROH main stage. Dame Darcey will chair the international jury throughout the competition.

Alongside hosting the newly named Margot Fonteyn International Ballet Competition, the RAD will be running a number of events, exhibitions and performances in honour of its centenary next year. Among the highlights are a free exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum from mid-2020; a commemorative coffee-table book, a series of 100 events in 100 places, and *Dance is in our DNA*, a video project using the app Seenit to showcase the diverse work of the RAD and its membership around the world. This special anniversary year will also see the RAD move to its new purpose built headquarters in Battersea, establishing a new 'home of dance' in London.

To find out more about the competition and RAD's centenary celebrations visit: www.royalacademyofdance.org/100

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About the Royal Academy of Dance

With 14,000 members in 85 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 around a quarter of a million pupils per year going on to take RAD exams.

About the Royal Opera House

The Royal Opera House (ROH) aims to engage with as many people as possible and to celebrate exceptional ballet and opera. As the home of The Royal Ballet, The Royal Opera and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, the ROH brings together the world's most extraordinary ballet and opera artists in more than 500 performances every year: live events that thrill, move and excite, and that transport people to other worlds through music, dance and theatre.

About The Dame Margot Fonteyn Scholarship Fund

The Dame Margot Fonteyn Scholarship Fund was established following the death of Margot Fonteyn in 1991 and exists to provide scholarships and prizes to vocational dance students in need of financial support and to promote interest in and appreciation of ballet as an art form. Recent scholarship recipients have included students at Central School of Ballet, English National Ballet School, Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance and the Royal Ballet School, as well as students participating in Genée International Ballet Competitions. For further information, please contact the Fund's chairman, Christopher Nourse: Christopher.nourse@roh.org.uk