



ROYAL
BALLET
SCHOOL

STUDENT FUND REPORT 2024/25

THANK YOU

Thanks to your generous philanthropy, our **213** full-time students have been able to thrive this academic year, both artistically and academically. It is the generosity of you and all our valued donors that allow The Royal Ballet School to continue enabling young dancers, regardless of their background or family income, to access our world-leading training and realise their full potential. Thank you for supporting these extraordinary young dancers, we hope you enjoy reading how your support has impacted the students this year.



The Royal Ballet School is a globally celebrated source of rare classical ballet talent. We foster academic and artistic excellence, holistically nurturing extraordinary students so they are equipped to flourish within and beyond careers in the performing arts. This unique and world-leading approach ensures students thrive physically and mentally, so they can reach their full potential on and off stage. Your support is essential and enables exceptional young dancers aged 11 to 19 from around the world to access the highest quality training to realise their brightest futures. Admission to the School is needs-blind and based solely on artistic merit and potential in classical ballet. No student should be deterred from applying to the School, and no gifted dancer is turned away due to a lack of financial means. Our graduates go on to professional careers with the world's most revered ballet companies.

'[The Royal Ballet School] not only enhanced my training but my all-round education and my development as a human being.'

(Gareth Haw, Principal Dancer with English National Ballet and alumnus)

THANK YOU FROM OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

I would like to personally thank you in my capacity as Chair of the Royal Ballet School for the transformational support that you have provided this academic year. It has been a wonderful privilege for me to witness the exceptional talents of all the students throughout the course of their training and learning journeys.



The recent Summer performances were exemplars of the discipline, artistry and commitment that has developed in each dancer, serving as inspiration to us all. We hope you enjoy reading these updates and look forward to welcoming you into the exciting next chapter for the School in its upcoming Centenary Year. Your philanthropy is valued and vital, and we are deeply grateful for the faith you have placed in our work.

NATASHA KAPLINSKY OBE, CHAIR

2024/25 has been an exciting year for everyone at The Royal Ballet School. I feel fortunate to have joined an organisation globally renowned for arts excellence, that is also deeply committed to widening access to high-quality training and opportunities for young people to experience dance.



Despite the worldwide reach and impact of the School's reputation for excellence, we are dealing with an extremely challenging operating environment, as are most schools and arts organisations at the moment. We believe admission to the School must continue to be based solely on talent and potential, never the ability to pay, and we are committed to finding more creative and sustainable ways to ensure this happens.

The Royal Ballet School wouldn't be able to support these inspiring young dancers in the way it does without the commitment of its generous donors. Thank you for championing our School.

PATRICK HARRISON, CEO

I am thrilled and honoured to have returned to The Royal Ballet School, this time as Artistic Director, particularly at this historic moment as we approach the Centenary year in 2026. My vision is that the School continues to be an environment where students can thrive artistically, physically and mentally, emerging prepared to lead the global dance community as artists, displaying excellence and resilience.



I'm committed to upholding and enhancing The Royal Ballet School's rich heritage while looking firmly to the future. In 2024/25, I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the inspiring students of the School alongside the highly talented and dedicated staff. Thank you for your support and we look forward to another exciting year ahead.

IAIN MACKAY, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

This year has been marked by exceptional dedication, artistry, and growth across all year groups. Our students have shown extraordinary commitment to their training, balancing the demands of their academic studies with the rigours of daily artistic endeavours. The culmination of their efforts was a series of outstanding performances, including our Summer Performances at Opera Holland Park and the Royal Opera House. These moments on stage are a true celebration of their progress and promise as the next generation of artists.



DAVID GAJADHARSINGH, ACADEMIC & PASTORAL PRINCIPAL

STUDENT ANNUAL REPORTS

We are delighted to share a selection of updates from our students' end-of-year reports.

PIETRO, PRE-PROFESSIONAL

Pietro, a dancer from Italy, has brought a vibrant energy and distinctive artistry to the studio this term, continuing to make steady and meaningful progress. His individuality shines through in his work, and he contributes positively to the studio environment.

He has shown his ability in pas de deux, with confident partnering demonstrated during his performance at the Chairman's Circle. We are delighted that Pietro will be joining the Royal Swedish Ballet next season - a fantastic opportunity that reflects his potential and promise as a developing artist.



MARIA, FIRST YEAR

Maria, a young dancer from Brazil, is a passionate and dedicated student whose love for dance shines in everything she does.

Although her year was disrupted by a frustrating injury, she handled her rehabilitation with admirable diligence. Now fully cleared to return to dance, Maria has come back stronger, technically and mentally.

Her resilience and determination have been rewarded with a solo role in Jessica Lang's new creation, a well-deserved recognition of her talent. She is also covering the role of Red Riding Hood in Aurora's Wedding.

HENRY, SECOND YEAR

Henry, a dancer from Australia, is a courteous and committed student who has worked diligently throughout the year. Although he faced an injury, he managed his training thoughtfully, gaining important experience in navigating the challenges that come with a dancer's life.

Earlier in the year, Henry earned a commendation in the Lynn Seymour Award for Expressive Dance for his compelling performance of the *Blessed Spirits* solo by Frederick Ashton. Due to his injury, he undertook his assessment ballet class later in the year—a decision that allowed him to feel fully prepared. He performed very well and has been offered a place in the Pre-professional year.



**80% OF OUR STUDENTS RELY
ON FINANCIAL SUPPORT**



**25% OF THEM RELY ON FULL
FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

OVERVIEW OF OUR UPPER SCHOOL STUDENTS' YEAR

PRE-PROFESSIONALS

Our Pre-professional students have had an incredibly busy and rewarding year, performing in a stunning array of Royal Ballet productions including *Cinderella*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Onegin*, and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, as well as Birmingham Royal Ballet's magical production of *The Nutcracker*. These experiences have been truly inspiring, giving our young dancers invaluable insights into the professional world and the rare opportunity to share the stage with the exceptional artists of both companies.

During auditions for professional companies, our dancers faced the challenges of international travel and intense audition schedules with bravery, professionalism, and independence—organising logistics and managing nerves with remarkable maturity. It has been a time of growth, reflection, and great personal achievement.



SECOND YEARS

This year is a pivotal one in students' training, providing space for exploration and personal expression. Their collective progress over the year has been remarkable—a true reflection of their resilience, passion, and determination to push themselves artistically and technically.

The Lynn Seymour Award for Expressive Dance offered a unique platform for each student to develop their artistic voice, a key element in preparing for the professional world. Alongside this, their participation in the Frederick Ashton Emerging Choreographer project gave them the invaluable opportunity to experiment with creativity, structure, and movement vocabulary in their own choreographic work.

FIRST YEARS

Our First Years have made an outstanding start to their time at the Upper School. With students hailing from countries including France, Mexico, Spain, Belgium, Korea, and Canada, this year group brings a rich diversity of experience and culture that has enhanced the studio environment and bonded the class in a truly special way.

Over the past several months, students prepared to take the stage in our Summer Performances. They worked with renowned choreographer Jessica Lang on her new piece, *Sweet Morning Blooms*, with the whole year group involved and approaching rehearsals with maturity, focus, and enthusiasm. It has been particularly rewarding to see their growth in confidence, especially among those who arrived with little English. By now, many have become nearly fluent, showing remarkable progress both in and out of the studio.

2025 GRADUATE CONTRACTS

We are delighted to announce the contracts awarded to our 2025 graduates. Six students will join The Royal Ballet Aud Jebsen Young Dancers Programme this year, and one will join Birmingham Royal Ballet/BRB2. Other students will join prestigious companies worldwide. Congratulations to all our graduates – we are immensely proud of their accomplishments and wish them the very best in their future endeavours.

Sofia Blok Lysvåg, Norwegian National Ballet 2

Amos Child, The Royal Ballet Aud Jebsen Young Dancers Programme

Aurora Chinchilla, The Royal Ballet Aud Jebsen Young Dancers Programme

Javier Cubillas Izaguirre, Joffrey Studio Company

Matteo Curley-Bynoe, American Ballet Theatre Studio Company

LilySophia Dashwood, The Australian Ballet

Ptolemy Gidney, American Ballet Theatre Studio Company

Alberto Gil Vicente, Boston Ballet II

Roo Jacobsen, Sacramento Ballet Second Company

Chiyo Kameda, Leipzig Ballet Junior Company

Yasemin Kayabay, Birmingham Royal Ballet/BRB2

Sean Manzano-Anderson, Oklahoma City Ballet Studio Company

Tristan-Ian Massa, The Royal Ballet Aud Jebsen Young Dancers Programme

Axel Mero, Bayerisches Staatsballet

Heewon Moon, National Ballet of Canada RBC Apprentice Programme

Shani Moran-Simmonds, The Royal Ballet Aud Jebsen Young Dancers Programme

Yuki Nagayasu, The Royal Ballet Aud Jebsen Young Dancers Programme

Erle Østraat, Norwegian National Ballet 2

Joe Parker, Nashville Ballet

Joe Parkinson, The Royal Ballet Aud Jebsen Young Dancers Programme

Edoardo Russo, Stuttgart Ballet

Krista Vaitkeviciute, Ballett Zürich Junior Company

Mingyang Xie, Finnish National Ballet Youth Company

Pietro Zironi, Royal Swedish Ballet Junior Company

SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

Our School's rich programme of activities ensures that students can flourish holistically and have the tools they need to meet life's challenges, contribute to their communities and go on to have a fulfilling career in professional dance and beyond.

EMERGING CHOREOGRAPHERS

Centring choreography in our training, the Ninette de Valois Choreographic Programme provides a platform for our emerging artists to create and explore, allowing them to develop their expressive instincts alongside their technical training. They experience working as a professional choreographer would, taking responsibility for all the elements that make a successful production, from research, casting and rehearsals to staging, props, lighting and costume design. Across 24/25, 36 students presented a diverse array of creative works in front of family members, supporters and staff, each revealing their unique choreographic voices. From themes of love, time and connection, to dreams, organs of the body and aliens, the works explored a vast array of concepts, mesmerising audiences with their originality, creativity and maturity.

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE VISIT

In May we welcomed American Ballet Theatre Studio Company (ABT), with Artistic Director Sascha Radetsky guest teaching the Pre-professional Year students' morning class at Upper School, Covent Garden. It was wonderful to see the students dancing alongside the 11 ABT Studio Company dancers and witness the energy that was created in the room when bringing these young people together. The students were challenged by Mr Radetsky with complex *petit allegro* combinations and were asked to incorporate elements of repertoire that they were working on into the ending of centre exercises. The Pre-professional students remarked that it was a very inspiring class.

'The excitement that you get in the build-up to the performance and the anticipation when you're in the wings, it's unreal and I've never felt anything like it.' (Cameron, Year 7 student)



THE NUTCRACKER

Each holiday season, *The Nutcracker* offers our students an extraordinary opportunity to work alongside professionals. This year, our Upper School had the privilege of joining Birmingham Royal Ballet and English National Ballet in their productions. Through weeks of rehearsals, costume fittings, and performances, our students got a taste of what professional life is like and had the opportunity to shine on stage. From dazzling waltzes to thrilling battle scenes, every moment on stage brought new challenges and unforgettable memories.

ASSOCIATE PROGRAMME

We currently have **765 students** taking part in our Associate Programme. Based in **seven centres** across the UK, the programme is designed to augment an individual's current training while introducing them to The Royal Ballet School's System of Training alongside other gifted children who aspire to a career in dance. Alongside their studies this year some of our Associate students also enjoyed performing at our Chair's Circle event in January. We are delighted to report that **23 out of 27 Year 7s** coming into the School in September 2025 came from our Junior Associate programme.



CREATIVE ARTIST TALKS

Our Creative Artist Talks offer students the chance to learn from those who have carved out successful careers both within and beyond ballet. In January Tyrone Singleton, former Principal at Birmingham Royal Ballet, shared his journey from a young student to a celebrated figure in the world of dance. Interviewed by three of our 1st Year students, Tyrone shared some inspiring stories and advice. He encouraged Royal Ballet School students to think beyond the stage and explore the many creative opportunities that lie ahead.



**19 STUDENTS PROGRESS THIS YEAR FROM
WHITE LODGE TO UPPER SCHOOL**



HEALTHCARE

Our team of 28 healthcare professionals continue to ensure that students are mentally and physically prepared for the demands of a professional career. Our programme is world-leading, and we are proud to be trailblazing on expert healthcare provision in dance education.

Physical health

In 2024/25, students have undergone termly screening and profiling exercises, measuring factors like jump height and training load. Our Associate students also receive tailored healthcare education and support from the School's dedicated team of healthcare professionals. This year, as part of our Enlighten series for teachers and students aged 18+, Emma Porter, the School's Training and Access Healthcare Lead, gave a webinar on REDs (Relative energy deficiency in sport). Emma said *'[it is] important to make sure we are spreading awareness [of REDs] and giving teachers the tools they need to mitigate more cases.'*

Mental health

Alongside the continuation of our in-house counselling service, students have been given the opportunity to attend mental wellbeing workshops, most recently these focused on building character strengths and working relationships. In October, students and staff celebrated World Mental Health Day with 'tea and talk', encouraging people to get together to discuss well-being.

ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS



EXCELLING AT UPPER SCHOOL

Layla Hotham has achieved the highest degree mark ever awarded by the School for her dissertation titled *How can classical ballet be re-claimed and re-signified in order to have the capacity to share feminist ideals?* Other dissertations (a 9,000 word final project) have considered international funding models for ballet, the effects of psychology on dance performance and one thesis questioned why women are underrepresented at leadership level in ballet companies.



FRENCH SUCCESS

Year 9 students successfully completed their portfolios, consisting of 12 pieces of work, for the FCSE French qualification. This is a pre-GCSE qualification whose results will be published in August.



LAMDA EXAMINATION SUCCESS

All Year 8 students sat the LAMDA Level 2 Award in Performance (Acting Grade 4) exams in February achieving outstanding results: 19 Distinctions and 1 Merit.



ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS RECOGNITION

Year 9 students took part in the Young Art 2025 exhibition in aid of Cancer Research UK. One student's artwork was chosen to be exhibited at The Oxo Gallery on the South Bank. His painting was chosen from more than 7,600 entries: an outstanding result.



ACHIEVEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Our international students who arrived in years 10 and 11 and for whom English is an additional language have successfully completed their Entry Level Certificate (ELC) in Science, demonstrating solid understanding and progress in core scientific concepts. In addition, they have completed the RSL level 2 certificate in creative and performing arts.



NATIONAL YOUTH MONOLOGUE COMPETITION

Several White Lodge students were involved in the National Youth Monologues Competition 2025. One student not only had his Drama monologue selected for the final but also went on to win the entire competition!



UK INTERMEDIATE MATHS CHALLENGE

Two Year 10 students participated in the UK Intermediate Maths Challenge, a competition designed for Year 10 and 11 students. One student earned a commendable bronze certificate, while the other came impressively close, missing the achievement by just a few marks.

KEY UPDATES

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FUND

In 2024/25, the Equal Opportunities Fund has continued to play a vital role in ensuring every student at The Royal Ballet School can participate fully in both the training and wider life of the School, regardless of financial background.

Alongside the need for support with core tuition there is also significant need for key items and experiences whilst training at the School. In 2024/25, the Fund covered essential additional costs like ballet shoes, music tuition, audition travel, hardship allowances, student prizes and other day-to-day needs.

‘Growing up in a single parent household, without support I would never have been able to afford the training which has given me a better life.’ (Blake Smith, Artist with The Royal Ballet, former Royal Ballet School student)

OUR CENTENARY YEAR

In 2026, we will mark our Centenary, celebrating 100 years of the School’s work to deliver classical ballet excellence to the world’s main stages, and set the standard for the future of classical ballet training.

This significant celebration in our School’s history will serve as an opportunity to rally support so we can continue enabling extraordinary young dancers to train here for the next 100 years. Through a series of curated events, we aim to raise the profile of The Royal Ballet School and celebrate the achievements of our students past and present, demonstrating our cultural leadership of the creative industries through artistry and athleticism in elite youth. We look forward to sharing more information about this exciting year with you.

FIVE YEAR PLAN

The cornerstones of success for our five-year plan are to:

- increase the number of full-time students to 250;
- enhance our Associate centres across the UK to extend reach and provide training for younger years closer to home;
- increase our fundraising and commercial income;
- modernise our estate.

Despite seven figure government cuts earlier this year, which sadly led to the closure of our Primary Steps programme and exacerbated our structural deficit, the Department for Education has confirmed additional Music and Dance Scheme places for next academic year, meaning we can grow to 230 students, from 213 this past year. There is still a substantial shortfall to meet all the annual costs of fees and boarding. Your support for the School makes all the difference, ensuring we deliver for our students despite significant challenges to the funding environment.

Thank you for your support

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