



excellent!

June 2008

excellent! performance and symposium focuses on top young music and dance talents

350 students to take part in celebration at Sadler's Wells

excellent! is a unique celebration of the achievements of this country's most talented young dancers and musicians supported by the Department for Children, Schools and Families' **Music and Dance Scheme**. A public performance by 350 students at Sadler's Wells on 15 July is followed by a symposium at the venue for an invited audience on 16 July.

Young dancers and musicians aged 10 -18 from 28 participating professional training schools and centres across England and from Scotland will be taking part in the performance at Sadler's Wells. Most of the performances involve collaborations between dance and music and are being specially created for the event.

The Performance

The evening will start around 6.30pm, with performances taking place outside the theatre and throughout the foyers. The VIP reception in the Cable and Wireless Room will include a site-specific piece for dancers and musicians performed by The Place Centre for Advanced Training and Royal College of Music.

A winning fanfare selected through a student competition and specially composed for **excellent!** will draw the audience back into the auditorium at the end of the interval. Howard Goodall has composed the **excellent!** anthem which will be sung by choristers from Salisbury Cathedral School to open the performances in the auditorium and by all performers and the audience, to the accompaniment of Wells Cathedral Big Band at the end.

Swindon Dance will perform a new work choreographed by Henri Oguike to music by Keith Tippett. A new piece composed by John Woolrich for the Sage Gateshead Weekend School choreographed by Neville Campbell will be performed in partnership with Dance City Academy. The programme will also feature a Piper from St. Mary's Music School, Edinburgh and from Sheffield Music Academy, a Cutlery Concerto.

The Symposium

On Wednesday 16 July, Tony Hall, Chief Executive of the Royal Opera House, chair the **excellent!** symposium, with John Holden of Demos as the keynote speaker. Taking part in a discussion are Sir Nicholas Kenyon, Managing Director of the Barbican; Jeanette Siddall, member of the Music and Dance Scheme Expert Group; Kenneth Tharp OBE, Chief Executive of The Place; and Debbie Wiseman MBE, composer.

With leading educationalists, artists and policy makers among the invited delegates, the Symposium will explore why excellence in dance and music matters, ways of identifying and nurturing exceptional potential in young people and the future direction of the Music and Dance Scheme. A discussion paper by John Holden can now be downloaded from the Excellent! website www.excellent.uk.com

The **excellent!** project is in association with Classic FM

Music and Dance Scheme

The Music and Dance Scheme provides means-tested support for 1,600 exceptionally talented young musicians and dancers so that they can access high-level training alongside a good academic education and help prepare them for careers in music and dance. Building on the opportunities available since 1981 at specialist residential schools through the MDS Aided Pupil Scheme, new national grants have been provided since 2004 through an expanding network of centres for advanced training (CATs). These enable children with potential and dedication to access specialist training whilst still attending their local schools. From September 2008, there will be eight residential schools and 20 CATs (including the six junior departments of music conservatoires) within the scheme.

The Music and Dance Scheme continues to increase opportunities to young people. New Centres for Advanced Training are in development in Birmingham (DanceXchange with Sampad, and a focus on South Asian dance); the East of England (Aldeburgh, Dance East), the East Midlands (Dance4) and London (Centre for Young Musicians). See www.dcsf.gov.uk/mds

Note to Editors

- 1 A list of participating organisations is attached. There will be opportunities for visits to meet staff and students and to see work in progress
- 2 Statements of support from leading musicians and dancers are attached
- 3 Full details of excellent! and film clips of students preparing for the performance are on www.excellent.uk.com
- 4 John Holden's discussion paper will be published on www.excellent.uk.com in late June
- 5 A report of the symposium will be produced following the event.

For further information and images, interviews and visits to participating organisations contact:
Sue Rose, PR Consultant: 0780 858 7246 suerose.pr@hotmail.co.uk

Participating partners providing performers:

Arts Educational School
Birmingham Conservatoire Junior Department
Chetham's School of Music
Dance City Academy
Elmhurst School for Dance
Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Junior Guildhall
Hammond School
Laban Centre for Advanced Training
National Youth Choirs of Great Britain
The Place Centre for Advanced Training
Purcell School
The Royal Ballet School
Royal Academy of Music, Junior Academy
Royal College of Music, Junior Department
Royal Northern College of Music, Junior School
St Mary's Music School Edinburgh
The Sage Gateshead Weekend School
Salisbury Cathedral Choir
Sheffield Music Academy
South Asian Music Youth Orchestra (SAMYO)
South West Music School
Swindon Dance Academy
Trinity College of Music, Junior Trinity
Wells Cathedral School
Yehudi Menuhin School
Yorkshire Young Dancers
Yorkshire Young Musicians
Youth Dance England

Performing partnerships:

- The Place Centre for Advanced Training/Royal College of Music
- Yehudi Menuhin School/The Royal Ballet School
- Dance City Academy/The Sage Gateshead/Weekend School
- Arts Educational School/The Purcell School
- South Asian Music Youth Orchestra (SAMYO)/ National Youth Choirs of Great Britain
- South West Music School/Swindon Dance Academy
- Elmhurst School for Dance/ Birmingham Conservatoire Junior Department
- Yorkshire Young Dancers/Yorkshire Young Musicians
- Trinity College of Music, Junior Trinity/Laban Centre for Advanced Training

Statements in support:

Sir Elton John, former student at the Royal Academy of Music: I know from my own experiences as a young student at the Royal Academy of Music how important it is to provide the best training facilities to enable young people to achieve their full potential. The Music and Dance Scheme has opened up possibilities for so many young people to benefit from this training, irrespective of their financial circumstances. We should be very proud that the UK has taken an international lead with this initiative, and particularly proud of our young performers. I wish this exciting event every success.

Jonathan Goddard, dancer with the Richard Alston Dance Company, principle teacher at The Place CAT, winner of the Dancing Times Award for best male dancer at the Critics Circle National Awards: When I began my dance training at a young age my parents had to search long and hard to find inspirational teachers, and we travelled a great deal to various centres. Since becoming a professional dancer I have aimed to make the teaching of others a unique and inspiring part of my career. Working with the Centre for Advanced Training over the last five years has allowed me to communicate my knowledge to young people who can also come and watch me perform on a regular basis. I believe that this interaction is the best kind of influence a dancer can have. I only wish I could have participated in the Music and Dance Scheme when I was young. I shall be sitting in the audience at Sadler's Wells, enjoying all the hard work that the students have put in. To have been involved with this emerging talent is something quite special for me."

Debbie Wiseman MBE, Composer (Trinity and Guildhall): I think Excellent! is a wonderful way of celebrating the talent of young dancers and musicians in this country. Spotting, training and nurturing talent at a young age is the best way to produce the artistic professionals of the future."

Violinist Tasmin Little (Yehudi Menuhin School): My experience as a student at the Yehudi Menuhin School enabled me to develop my abilities in a wonderful environment. It was inspiring to watch the older students at the school, as well as to receive tuition from an amazing variety of world class musicians - the most important of whom was, of course, Yehudi Menuhin. The age of 11-18 is a critical time in the development of a young musician - one needs to balance sensitively the issues of nurturing individuality and talent without pushing a young person beyond their capability.

Wayne McGregor, Artistic Director, Random Dance, Resident Choreographer, Royal Ballet and recently appointed DCMS Youth Champion: The Music and Dance scheme provides an opportunity for exceptionally talented young people to access top quality training and artistic experience. Initiatives such as the Centres for Advanced Training in dance provide a gateway to vocational training and professional careers. The foundation training that the scheme provides initiates the creation of young dancers who have had exposure to a wide variety of choreographers and working methods, ensuring versatility and open creative thinking augmented by an extensive technical training.