

# ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE

For immediate release

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Royal Academy of Dance celebrates its transformative Children's Scholarship Scheme

Running from 1925-1984, the scheme paved the way for a career in dance, with former scholars including Wayne Sleep



RAD scholar Sissie Smith opened her own school in 1929, entering pupils for scholarship auditions and becoming the first scholarship teacher in the Nottingham area in 1931.

This year, Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) celebrates 100 years since the establishment of its Children's Scholarship Scheme.

The scheme, which ran for 60 years from 1925-1984, was a key pathway to a lifelong career in dance, offering more than 2,000 young people across the UK two free RAD-syllabus ballet classes a week.

When the scheme first began there were very few schools available that gave professional training to young students. With the Children's Scholarship Scheme however, areas across the breadth of the UK, including Leeds, Edinburgh, Cardiff and London, were able to run classes in specific centres designed to nurture young talent and provide unmissable opportunities.

Such was the scheme's impact, its legacy lives on in today's vocational ballet school associate programmes taught around the world.

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RAD Vice President and scholar Wayne Sleep said: “With thanks to the RAD. The scheme gave me the chance to get a place at the Royal Ballet School when I was 12 years old, because I’d been trained rather well with the RAD syllabus. When I auditioned, it stood me in good stead, and I got a place out of 250 other kids!”

Other notable names of RAD scholars include world-leading past and present dancers and choreographers Pamela May, Lynn Seymour, Kevin O’Hare, Russell Maliphant and Will Tuckett.

Material about the Children’s Scholarship Scheme is housed in the RAD’s Wolfson Library which contains one of the largest specialist dance collections in the UK. The archive holds information on the heritage and the development and history of British ballet.

Eleanor Fitzpatrick, Archives and Records Manager at the RAD said: “The scholarship scheme gave many young people the opportunity to succeed in a career in dance but also provided a framework and discipline transferable to careers in various walks of life. The RAD was quick to recognise that young British talent might be lost if the appropriate training was not provided at the right time by the right people and many scholars were taken into the performance companies emerging at the time including the Vic-Wells, Ballet Rambert and International Ballet.”

In celebration of the scheme, this month the RAD launches a series of monthly spotlights on notable scholars, sharing their inspiring stories and rare photos.

Later this year, an exhibition open to the public will explore the scheme’s rich history and highlight significant teachers involved.

In the autumn, former scholars will come together for a reunion event at RAD headquarters, featuring a panel discussion with former scholars, chaired by RAD’s Artistic Director Alexander Campbell.

Were you an RAD scholar? Whether or not you pursued a dance career, we’d love to hear how this experience shaped your journey.

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## **Notes to Editors**

For further information, please contact: Katie Hagan, Press and Communications Manager at [press@rad.org.uk](mailto:press@rad.org.uk)

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

The RAD is one of the world's most influential dance education and training organisations. With its global headquarters in London, the RAD works locally and around the world to bring dance to diverse communities, widen access to dance and share the benefits and wellbeing that dance brings.

With a strong global membership presence in over 85 countries, each year around 250,000 dancers learn the RAD syllabus and take exams. Over 1,000 students are enrolled in in-person and distance-learning dance teacher training programmes.

The RAD empowers people through dance education and enjoyment and believes that 'every body' should have the opportunity to learn to dance.

[www.royalacademyofdance.org/](http://www.royalacademyofdance.org/)