

PRESS RELEASE: 9 September 2020



NATIONAL YOUTH BALLET BOUNCING BACK

- KEY NEW APPOINTMENTS SPEARHEAD WAY FORWARD
- CHOREOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE AUTUMN 2020
- *BOUNCING BACK* ONLINE A BIG SUCCESS
- RESPONSE TO COVID-19 CRISIS – NYB IN THIS TOGETHER

A brand new **Choreographic Challenge** for Autumn is the latest initiative emerging from National Youth Ballet since the appointment of a new leadership team put in place by NYB Trustees in June 2020 to build on the legacy of NYB founder Jill Tookey. General Manager **Melanie Wilson** and Creative Development Director **Jo Meredith** are already making strides in these challenging times with inspirational programmes of creativity, diversity and inclusivity on a national scale.

The latest project, launched on 7 September, is NYB's **2020 CHOREOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE** which invites young dancers to explore how it feels to re-emerge and engage with the world around them as national lockdown eases. During the course of the next month dancers select one of four specially commissioned pieces of music by young composer **Nicola Chang** to inspire their one-minute work. NYB ambassadors **Max Westwell** and **Vanessa Vince Pang** will be hosting discussions on NYB's social media channels to help participants develop their skills and demystify the art of choreography, while weekly interactive Zoom workshops beginning 13 September will support and develop participants' skills in all areas of the creative process.

Performances are then filmed and submitted by 9 October for assessment by a panel of esteemed judges including **Sir Matthew Bourne** and **Etta Murfitt** from New Adventures who will present the winner awards in each category, while The Royal Ballet's **Marcelino Sambé** will present the Musicality Award. Winning entries will be showcased on NYB's website and social media channels.

As part of NYB's successful online and interactive response to the Covid crisis, [#nybinthistogether](#), National Youth Ballet also programmed an online initiative, **Bouncing Back** within its **Beyond Ballet** professional development programme to build confidence and resilience. This took place in August as an intensive weekend of workshops post-lockdown to help students aged 8-18 prepare physically and psychologically to bounce back

to school. Enthusiastic participant feedback commented on the energy and commitment of the teachers and the inspirational diversity of activities which focused on developing resilience through ballet technique, confidence in performance through drama, and nurturing a healthy body and mind with bespoke health and wellbeing talks.

Introduced by NYB patron **Darcey Bussell DBE**, the sessions were led by a team of experienced professionals including Ballet Black co-founder **Denzil Bailey**; associate director of *Billy Elliot the Musical* in London **Nick Evans**; former BRB dancer and teacher **Carrie Johnson** who specialises in promoting optimal performance potential and wellbeing; and choreographer, dancer and NYB Associate Creative Director **Charlie Brittain** who is also a registered Clinical Sports Therapist and musculoskeletal health specialist.

Founded in 1988 **National Youth Ballet** is the UK's foremost organisation providing unique and inspiring opportunities, onstage and backstage, for young people aged 8-18 to create, perform and take part in ballet through education, training, creativity and performance and experience the journey from studio to stage and emulate a professional dance company through a range of programmes and activities.

Further information: Claire Bowdler, NYB Marketing Manager
T.07801 538053 E. claire.bowdler@nationalyouthballet.org

Notes to editors:

Full details of the projects, teachers etc: <https://nationalyouthballet.org>

Melanie Wilson previously worked as Music Projects Co-ordinator at the Southbank Centre where she was responsible for delivering the classical music season under Amelia Freedman CBE, FRAM from 2000 to 2007. In 2007 she became Producer in the Artistic Programming team at the Southbank Centre. Melanie worked on contemporary composer festivals including Sir Harrison Birtwistle and Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra's week long residency with Gustavo Dudamel, Daniel Barenboim Artist as Leader series - *Beethoven Sonata Cycle*. Melanie has since enjoyed working with Vocal Futures - a foundation set up to inspire young people to engage with classical music - producing *The Choice* opera at The Britten Theatre, Royal College of Music in 2015; as Competition Manager for National Choir of the Year 2016 with BBC Four; and Producer, Stage Manager and Artist Liaison for Tate Live Performances, Tate Modern, since 2016. She will continue working as Programme Operations Manager at Bloomsbury Festival where she has been since 2017. <https://nationalyouthballet.org/bio/melanie-wilson/>

Jo Meredith is an alumna of National Youth Ballet and has created seven ballets for the company. She is an international movement director, dance educator and choreographer. She was Creative Director of English National Ballet's ENB Youth Co between 2014 and 2019 and, during that time, directed their flagship education project *Dance Journeys* at Sadler's Wells. She is currently the Creative Director of ENB's new youth dance initiative ENB Youth Co-nnect, a company designed to train and prepare young dancers to audition for ENB Youth Co. For British Youth Music Theatre she directed and choreographed *More in Common*, a musical inspired by the life and work of murdered MP Jo Cox. She is associate lecturer in choreography at London Studio Centre. Movement direction includes productions such as *I Masnadieri*, *la Bohème*, *Tosca* and *Rigoletto*, working alongside directors Sir David McVicar, Amy Lane, Kasper Holten and others at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Icelandic Opera, Savonlinna Opera Festival, Royal Danish Opera, Teatro Real, Madrid and Teatro Alla Scala, Milan. <https://nationalyouthballet.org/bio/jo-meredith-2/>