



Press release

July 7 2020

Doncaster Dances

The Royal Ballet partners with Doncaster for its first ever virtual dance celebration

This Summer **The Royal Ballet** is partnering with **Cast** and **Doncaster Council** to get Doncaster Dancing.

Local residents, primary schools, sports clubs, care homes and dance schools will take part in a three-week community digital project to create their own original piece of dance on the themes of lockdown and social distancing.

This project, a first for The Royal Ballet, will culminate in a film that will premiere on Saturday 5 September online through the ROH's YouTube and Facebook channels and broadcast in Doncaster town centre.

Taking inspiration from Kenneth MacMillan's *Romeo and Juliet*, local participants will use online resources, as well as remote direction from Royal Ballet dancer and Doncaster local **Charlotte Tonkinson**, to learn steps and create their own sections of dance exploring themes of loss, love and separation, friendship, family and solidarity.

The project will culminate in a collective performance, which will be edited into a short dance film featuring Charlotte Tonkinson and fellow Royal Ballet dancer Joseph Aumeer as a modern-day *Romeo and Juliet* to be premiered on 5 September.

Last year the Royal Opera House announced this exciting partnership with Doncaster through Doncaster Creates (Doncaster's Culture Development programme). Although no longer able to perform live at Cast due to the ongoing impact of COVID-19, the company was eager to continue its commitment to Doncaster and to bring dance to the heart of the community.

Member of Parliament for Doncaster North, **Ed Miliband**, helped to establish *Doncaster Creates* as the region's first cultural community project to harness and nurture the creativity of Doncaster.

Supporting this first community film to come through the **Doncaster Creates** partnership, Mr Miliband said: "I am delighted to see our local community bring together The Royal Ballet, Cast and

the Local Authority to harness the power of creativity and bring our community together to reflect on the impact of COVID-19 and collectively celebrate the importance of dance. Even despite Covid19 it is wonderful to see the determination that the show must go on."

Charlotte Tonkinson, dancer with The Royal Ballet comments "It's a wonderful feeling to bring The Royal Ballet to my hometown of Doncaster. How exciting to celebrate dance through Doncaster Dances with its first-ever virtual dance project. It is amazing, especially during this challenging time, to feel a sense of togetherness and to share the joy of dance. Working with community groups and school children, I look forward to lifting their spirits and working with the local community to bring this project to life at a crucial time in Doncaster".

Deborah Rees, Director of Cast adds "The Covid-19 pandemic may have temporarily closed our doors but in the last three months we've experienced an outpouring of togetherness, generosity and creativity. The instinct to dance has brought people together across the globe and this project gives an amazing opportunity for people to dance together from their own homes. Cast and the Royal Opera House have worked hard to maintain contact with our communities and maintain the spirit of this unique lockdown project. In doing so, we've created a new way of sharing our love of dance. *Romeo and Juliet* is a story of division, of a community torn in two and brought together by an act of love. The end result of this project - a community film - will allow local people, some of whom have been isolated from the outside world for months, to express themselves and come together once again."

Cllr Nigel Ball, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Leisure and Culture, said: "It is tremendous that we have teamed up with The Royal Ballet for this unique project. It will give school children, residents, clubs and groups and even those in care homes across the borough the opportunity to learn ballet from the best in the business. Together they will learn a new skill, get active and at the same time help create a highly original piece of dance which will be premiered later in the year."

Ends

Notes to editors

#Doncasterdances

1. Images can be downloaded here: <https://we.tl/t-l4c708p9bC>
2. For more information, content and interviews, contact Ashley Woodfield: Ashley.woodfield@roh.org.uk
3. Contact Doncaster Council, Jenny Dewsnap: Jenny.Dewsnap@doncaster.gov.uk
4. To learn more about this Royal Ballet community project, contact: amy.mcgann@roh.org.uk

The Royal Opera House would like to thank the generosity of the Mohn Westlake Foundation and Lily Safra

About The Royal Ballet

Under the directorship of Kevin O'Hare, The Royal Ballet unites tradition and innovation in world-class performances, and is a driving force in the development of ballet as an art form. Based at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, it brings together today's most dynamic and versatile dancers

with a world-class orchestra and leading choreographers, composers, conductors, directors and creative teams to share awe-inspiring theatrical experiences with diverse audiences worldwide. The Company's extensive repertory embraces 19th-century classics, the singular legacy of works by Founder Choreographer Frederick Ashton and Principal Choreographer Kenneth MacMillan and the compelling new canon of work including pieces by Resident Choreographer Wayne McGregor and Artistic Associate Christopher Wheeldon.

About the Royal Opera House

The Royal Opera House wants to give everyone access to exceptional ballet and opera. As The Royal Ballet, The Royal Opera and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, we bring together the world's most extraordinary artists in more than 500 performances every year on our two stages.

We are open every day from 10am. Across the 2018/19 Season we welcomed more than one million people through our doors as ticketholders, participants in our programme of free and ticketed daytime events, and as visitors to our bars, cafes, restaurants and shop. A further one million people enjoyed our work in cinemas, at free screenings and through streamed and televised performances up and down the UK. Our ongoing partnership with the BBC saw 11 of our productions broadcasts across their platforms last Season.

The ROH has a commitment to Widening participation and deepening learning for all ages and achieves this through enabling first encounters with dance, music and theatre craft and talent development programmes including Chance to Dance.

Our national school programme includes Create and Sing, Create and Dance and Design and Make and school matinees. During the 2018/19 Season these programmes supported teachers from 1,394 schools, 81% of which were outside London, bringing arts to children and young people the length and breadth of the country.