

ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE

Royal Academy of Dance announces portrait competition

Singer-songwriter Sophie Ellis-Bextor, former English National Ballet Dancer Shevelle Dynott and royal portraitist Ralph Heimans join Dame Darcey Bussell in star-studded judging panel

- Royal Academy of Dance announces portrait competition to celebrate opening of brand-new global headquarters in Spring 2022
- Budding artists from across the UK are invited to enter the competition from Wednesday 8 December 2021
- A judging panel of singer song-writer Sophie Ellis-Bextor, alongside leading royal portraitist Ralph Heimans and Shevelle Dynott, former English National Ballet dancer join RAD President Dame Darcey Bussell and Chief Executive Luke Rittner to select the winning work
- Artwork proposals will be submitted for the chance to hang prominently in the brand-new building, unveiled in Spring 2022.
- Sponsored by Freed of London, the winner will be announced in January 2022, with the winning work unveiled later in the year as well as a commissioning fee of £4,000
- For further information, and details on how to enter visit: <https://www.royalacademyofdance.org/portrait>
- Images available [here](#), password 'RAD'

8 December 2021: The Royal Academy of Dance today announces details of its portrait competition for artists across the UK.

Launched to celebrate what will be a momentous year for the internationally renowned dance education organisation with the opening of its brand-new global headquarters in Spring next year – entrants are asked to submit a portrait proposal of founding RAD President and ballet pioneer Dame Adeline Genée. Sponsored by historic dance shoemakers Freed of London, the winner will be announced in January 2022 and will then receive a commissioning fee of **£4,000**, with an additional £1,000 for material costs, to create the final painting - which will hang prominently in the new building when launched next year.

Founded in 1920 as the Association of Teachers of Operatic Dancing of Great Britain to raise the standard of Dance Teaching in the UK, the RAD brought together five eminent dance professionals – the international best of the best across the principal schools of ballet training (French, Italian, Russian, Danish and British) - to form a committee for the reformation of dance teaching. Including world-renowned dancers Adeline Genée, Phyllis Bedells, Lucia Cormani and Tamara Karsavina, as well as Eduard Espinosa; the group's first task was to devise a syllabus that would provide the foundation for a new British standard.

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Dame Adeline was, in her day, an extremely famous dancer and a royal favourite but she was also a force to be reckoned with, a strong personality with drive and focus. The RAD already owns two portraits of Genée, however the idea behind the competition is for her to be seen through a modern lens, hopefully to portray something new. She was not only the RAD's founder and first President she was a pioneer who shaped modern British ballet as we know and love it, the competition will ensure that she is seen and admired by staff, teachers and dancers alike as part of their working day.

The winning artwork will join a rare portrait of co-founder and legendary ballerina Tamara Karsavina by Jacques Émile Blanche, which was gifted to the RAD earlier this year, continuing the founding members' mission to inspire dancers for generations to come.

Luke Rittner CBE, Chief Executive, Royal Academy of Dance says: "We are delighted to be launching this exciting RAD portrait competition, inviting artists both amateur and professional to give one of our founders renewed recognition. As the Academy enters its second century and moves into a brand-new headquarters, we look forward to the unveiling of the winning work. I hope that the successful portrait will bring Adeline Genée "back to life" and that it will become a daily reminder of her important legacy for generations to come".

Freed of London says: "Freed of London are delighted to be supporting this exciting collaboration. Dame Adeline Genée was a true pioneer of British ballet. As a performer she made ballet more popular than ever before. Through her work with the Royal Academy of Dance, generations of dancers were given access to formalised training. This competition links the creative worlds of dance and art, widening the audience, something we are sure she would have approved of!"

Dame Darcey Bussell DBE, President, Royal Academy of Dance says: "What better way to mark this exciting moment in the RAD's history, than with the launch of a new RAD portrait competition. I look forward to co-chairing our wonderful panel of judges and can't wait to see, what I know will be, the exceptional and creative works that our founding member Dame Adeline Genée inspires".

Panel judge Sophie Ellis-Bextor says: "I am honoured to join the panel for the RAD portrait competition. As well as the great pleasure of spending time with our line-up of very talented judges from across the world of arts and dance, I am thrilled to be a part of this celebration of one of the pioneers of dance history and look forward to seeing submissions from artists all over the UK".

Ralph Heimans, portraitist, says: "I'm thrilled to be on the judging panel for the Royal Academy of Dance portrait competition and I encourage all artists to enter. The legendary ballerina Dame Adeline Genée is a wonderful and inspiring subject, and her life story presents artists with a creative opportunity to explore the interplay between the disciplines of dance and the visual arts. I'm very excited to see the results!"

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Shevelle Dynott, former English National Ballet dancer, says: “What an honour it is to be on the panel for the Royal Academy of Dance portrait competition. Art is an extremely important part of expression in our society, and when put together it is a delight. What a tremendous tribute to Dame Adeline Genée, who I’m sure would be thrilled to have her portrait painted over 100 years later. So, all you artists out there show us what you got!”

The competition launches as the RAD is just steps away from meeting its £19.5m capital fundraising target for its new global headquarters in Battersea, launching in Spring 2022. The new building will become an international home for dance, allowing the charity to realise the potential of the 60,000 sq ft headquarters to expand on its 100-year history of high-quality dance education to bring the transformational power of dance to more people, regardless of age, ability, or location.

The portrait competition coincides with the launch of a dance-inspired art competition for primary schools from Battersea and across the Wandsworth Borough.

The winning portrait will be on view in the new Royal Academy of Dance headquarters in Battersea, launching in Spring 2022 as the brand-new home for dance.

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Notes to Editors

About the Royal Academy of Dance

Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) is one of the most influential dance education and training organisations in the world with a strong global membership in 85 countries. Established in 1920 to improve standards and re-invigorate dance training, the Academy helps and encourages its teachers to perfect their teaching skills and pass on this knowledge to their students. There are currently over 1,000 students in full-time or part-time teacher training programmes with the Academy and each year the examination syllabus is taught to thousands of young people worldwide, with around a quarter of a million pupils per year going on to take RAD exams.

About Freed of London

Freed of London is the world’s leading designer and manufacturer of professional dance shoes. With an extensive history dating back to 1929, Freed of London shoes are hand

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crafted in the UK and today the Freed of London portfolio includes dance apparel, bridal and fashion collections.

From humble beginnings in London's West End, Freed of London was founded by cobbler Frederick Freed in 1929. Working from a basement in Covent Garden, the same site where the brand's flagship store now stands, Mr Freed and his wife revolutionised the dance shoe industry by tailoring shoes to a dancer's individual needs. To this day this philosophy remains, and Freed of London shoes continue to be made by hand in the UK.

About Ralph Heimans

British-Australian artist Ralph Heimans (b.1970) is one of today's leading royal portrait artists. His official Diamond Jubilee portrait of HM Queen Elizabeth is in the collection of Westminster Abbey, while his portraits of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh (2017) and HRH The Prince of Wales (2018) are in the Royal Collection.

His large-scale portraits are renowned for their innovative compositions that offer engaging narratives about his subjects and their life stories. His sitters include extraordinary individuals who have made a significant contribution in the fields of arts, academia, law, business, and philanthropy. Their portrayals are informed by a creative integration of subject and context. Figures are placed in complex spatial arrangements, underpinned by an innovative use of geometry, reflection and perspective. His technical approach pays homage to the 17th Century masters of chiaroscuro, exploiting exquisite effects of light, which appear to illuminate the inner world of his subjects.

Heimans' works are held in major international collections including The National Portrait Gallery in Washington, The Royal Collection, Westminster Abbey, The National Portrait Gallery of Australia, The National History Museum of Denmark, Australia's Parliament House and The European Court in Luxembourg. In 2014 he was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia for services to portraiture.

About Sophie Ellis-Bextor

Sophie Ellis-Bextor shot to fame as a vocalist on Spiller's huge number one single, 'Groovejet' and her worldwide smash hit, 'Murder on the Dancefloor'. Her debut solo album, 'Read My Lips', was released in 2001 and sold more than 2 million copies worldwide. Her subsequent album releases include 'Shoot from the Hip' (2003), 'Trip the Light Fantastic' (2007) and 'Make a Scene' (2011). In 2014, Sophie released her album 'Wanderlust' on her own label EBGB's, which was co-written and produced by Ed Harcourt. It proved to be a critical and commercial success spending 3 weeks in the UK top 10 and selling over 100,000 copies.

Sophie followed this release and collaboration with 2016's 'Familia', which saw her return to the dancefloor with her single 'Come With Us'. In January of 2019, with Ed Harcourt as Producer and Amy Langley (of Dirty Pretty Strings) arranging, Sophie released orchestrated versions of all her hits and past single releases with her orchestral greatest hits album 'The Song Diaries'. In 2020, her Kitchen Discos, performed at home during

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lockdown with her five sons and recorded by her husband, musician Richard Jones, were watched and enjoyed by 40 million around the world. Following the performances, she released her latest album 'Songs From The Kitchen Disco' in late 2020 on Cooking Vinyl, bringing together Sophie's hits with many other songs from her phenomenally successful lockdown Kitchen Disco performances, garnering further critical acclaim and yet another top 10 UK album chart position.

About Shevelle Dynott

Shevelle Dynott was born in London and started dancing aged seven when he was spotted at his Brixton primary school by scouts for 'Chance to Dance', a scheme which aimed to scout talented inner-city children and expand ballet's reach beyond its traditionally white middle-class base. In 1997, he was the first child to complete the 'Chance to Dance' training and be accepted on the Royal Ballet School's Junior Associates programme. In 2004 Shevelle won a bronze medal in the RAD's Genée International Ballet Competition and upon completing his training in 2005, Dynott joined the English National Ballet as a company artist and has appeared in numerous productions: Akram Khan's *Giselle* Nureyev's *Romeo and Juliet* Macmillan's *Sleeping Beauty*. Shevelle is now a freelance artist and has recently completed a 7-month acting course at identity school of acting in Brixton.

About Dame Darcey Bussell, OBE

Darcey Bussell is a former Principal with The Royal Ballet and the most famous British ballerina of her generation. During her nearly twenty years as a Principal, she won worldwide renown for her unique combination of having a tall and athletic physique whilst dancing with soft lyricism.

Darcey trained at The Royal Ballet School and joined the Company in 1988. She was promoted to Principal in 1989, aged just 20, after the premiere of Kenneth MacMillan's *The Prince of the Pagodas*, in which she had created the lead role. Darcey retired from the Company in June 2007 with a performance of MacMillan's *Song of the Earth*, broadcast live on BBC2. She came out of retirement to dance the 'Spirit of the Flame' at the 2012 London Olympics closing ceremony.

Darcey's extensive broadcast work includes being a judge on *Strictly Come Dancing*, many documentaries for the BBC and she has presented The Royal Ballet's worldwide cinema relays since 2014. She remains a Guest principal coach at The Royal Ballet and is Artist Laureate of the Royal Ballet School.

Her books include *Darcey Bussell: Evolved*, *Darcey Bussell: A Life in Pictures*, the 'Magic Ballerina' children's series and her autobiography. In 2015 she founded DDMIX (diverse dance mix), a dance fitness charity, aimed at getting dance fitness to be part of PE in state schools.

Darcey became the President of the Royal Academy of Dance in 2012.

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About Luke Rittner

Luke Rittner took up his appointment as Chief Executive on 1 September 1999. Previously he was Secretary General of the Arts Council of Great Britain (1983–1990), Communications Director for Sotheby's Europe (1992–1998) and in previous years has run the Bath Festival. He was also Founder-Director of the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts (now Arts & Business).

Luke has served on many arts boards, including the Victoria & Albert Museum and the British Council. He was a non-executive Director of Carlton Television until 1993. He is currently Chairman of the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) and holds an Honorary Doctorate of the Arts from the University of Bath and an Honorary Doctorate of Civil Law from the University of Durham.

Luke was awarded a CBE for services to the arts, particularly dance, in the 2017 New Year's Honours List.

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