

Scottish Ballet announces Multiple Sclerosis pilot, as part of expanding Dance Health programme

Scottish Ballet is delighted to announce the expansion of its Dance Health programme, with the addition of a brand-new initiative for people living with Multiple Sclerosis. Building on its pioneering work with people living with neurological conditions, Scottish Ballet will develop and deliver a programme of dance sessions, with the aim of improving the physical, mental and social wellbeing of those living with MS.

Currently a condition that affects over 11,000 people living in Scotland, proportionally the highest number of people in the UK, MS is a neurological condition that affects the brain and spinal cord; causing a range of symptoms such as tremors, spasms and loss of vision.

Working in collaboration with US institutions such as The University of Florida Center for Arts and Medicine and Georgetown University Medical Center, Scottish Ballet will build on existing research to create their own initiative for MS; partnering with the MS National Therapy Centre (Revive MS Support Glasgow) and MS Society Scotland on the development and delivery of classes in Scotland.

Continuing its research within Dance Health, Scottish Ballet will work with Glasgow-based partner Dr Bethany Whiteside at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) to consider the impact of participant's mobility, balance, artistic, creative expression, mental health and wellbeing; contributing to the global field of research.

Already a leader within this increasingly significant area, Scottish Ballet has been developing its Dance Health programme since 2015, and currently runs two Dance Health programmes: **Time to Dance (Dementia)** for those living with dementia and their carers, and **Dance for Parkinson's Scotland**, delivered in partnership with Dance Base in regional hubs across Scotland.

To date, a number of communities across Scotland have benefited from the work of the Dance Health programme, reporting a wide range of tangible health and social benefits, that Scottish Ballet will continue to develop.

For more information and to register your interest in the pilot classes, please contact Dance Health Co-ordinator Tiffany Stott on tiffany.stott@scottishballet.co.uk.

Talking about the announcement of the Multiple Sclerosis programme, CEO/Artistic Director of Scottish Ballet, Christopher Hampson, said:

'At Scottish Ballet we are hugely proud of all our work, both on and off stage so, in our 50th anniversary year, we are delighted to announce the expansion of our Dance Health programme.'

'Adding to the success of our pioneering work with Dance for Parkinson's Scotland and Time to Dance, we are excited to be broadening our programme by launching an initiative for those living with Multiple Sclerosis; inviting people to benefit from the power of dance, through specialist classes delivered by our Engagement Team.'

Commenting on the expansion, Catherine Cassidy, Director of Engagement at Scottish Ballet, said:

'In recent years our work with the Dance for Parkinson's Scotland and Time to Dance programmes has given us the confidence to begin work on a new dance initiative for those living with Multiple Sclerosis.'

We are delighted to be collaborating with a range of arts and medical specialists from The University of Florida Center for Arts and Medicine and Georgetown University Medical Center, MS Society Scotland and MS Revive.

As with all our Dance Health activity, classes will be delivered by specialist dance artists and musicians in the Scottish Ballet studios at Tramway. We are excited to welcome our new participants this spring.'

Commenting on the work, Dr Bethany Whiteside, Research Lecturer at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, said:

'The knowledge exchange partnership between Scottish Ballet and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland evidences and supports the Company's commitment to their Dance Health programmes. Through working in close collaboration with key stakeholders, the research and evaluation already has a tangible and positive impact on the wellbeing of dancers with Parkinson's and dementia, through informing internal learning and the wider dance, health, and academic sectors.'

Dance for Parkinson's Scotland

Dance for Parkinson's Scotland is a joint initiative between Scottish Ballet, Scotland's national dance company, and Dance Base, Scotland's national centre for dance; delivered in partnership with Parkinson's UK and supported by The Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Established in 2016, the Dance for Parkinson's Scotland programme supports those with Parkinson's to experience the benefits of dance and creativity - improving balance, spatial awareness, confidence and fluidity in movement.

Every week, around 75 participants take part in sessions delivered by Scottish Ballet in Glasgow and Dance Base in Edinburgh. Over the past year, new regional hubs have been created in five locations across Aberdeen, Dundee, Greenock, Inverness and Kilmarnock with plans for three further regional hubs to be developed, bringing the total number to ten across Scotland.

Time to Dance

Time to Dance is a series of free weekly drop-in classes that are hosted on a Sunday for families, individuals, people living with dementia and their carers.

By developing communication, expression, coordination, balance, creativity and social interaction, dancing engages the brain and improves quality of life. This can help with common symptoms associated with dementia, such as memory loss.

Supported by the Life Changes Trust, weekly classes currently take place in Glasgow. As well as being a place to come to dance, have fun, and socialise, Time to Dance participants can learn something about Scottish Ballet's repertoire and to attend our theatre events as our guests.

For further information on Scottish Ballet and the Dance Health programme, alongside access, community engagement and training visit: <https://www.scottishballet.co.uk>

NOTES TO EDITORS:

A press pack, including photographs, can be found available for [download here](#).

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About Scottish Ballet

- Scottish Ballet, founded in 1969, is Scotland's national dance company. Based in Glasgow, the company performs regularly across Scotland, and increasingly throughout the UK and internationally – promoting Scotland's pioneering spirit far and wide. In 2019, Scottish Ballet celebrates 50 years of inspiring audiences on stage and beyond, with a creative vision crafted by Scotland. For more information about the anniversary season, visit: www.scottishballet.co.uk/50
- Under CEO/Artistic Director Christopher Hampson, Scottish Ballet presents bold, adventurous performances rooted in strong classical technique, accompanied by the Scottish Ballet Orchestra. The company's broad repertoire includes new versions of the classics and ground-breaking commissions, as well as an innovative digital season every two year
- Scottish Ballet runs an extensive engagement programme, tailored to the needs of diverse communities, promoting confidence, fostering well-being and encouraging creativity through dance.
- Scottish Ballet is funded by the Scottish Government.
- Scottish Ballet's Dance Health programme is supported by Baillie Gifford, with a funding commitment for the next five years. The Dance Health programme is aligned to the Company's repertoire, in particular the work created as part of the Five in Five campaign which looks to create five new narrative ballets in five years; launched to celebrate the company's 50th anniversary in 2019.
- Scottish Ballet's Dance for Parkinson's programme is delivered in partnership with Dance Base, Edinburgh, and generously funded by The Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Scottish Ballet's 'Time to Dance' programme for people living with dementia and their carers is supported by the Life Changes Trust.
- Scottish Ballet's upcoming MS initiative is supported by The RS MacDonald Charitable Trust.

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