

## **First Minister Nicola Sturgeon celebrates 50 years of Scottish Ballet**

- Today, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon paid an official visit to Scottish Ballet to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Scotland's national dance company.
- The First Minister took part in a community dance class for people living with Parkinson's, watched company and Youth Exchange dancers in rehearsals, and met with staff, dancers and participants to mark this milestone year.
- New grant of £65,000 from International Touring Fund announced.

The Scottish Government supports Scottish Ballet to perform at the highest level across Scotland and internationally, as well as to produce pioneering digital work and deliver an extensive community engagement programme. In addition to Scottish Ballet's core funding for 2019-20, today the First Minister announced an International Touring Fund grant of £65,000. This will enable the company to bring a mixed bill programme to New York City as part of a US tour in 2020, and to deliver a Youth Exchange project for talented young Scottish dancers in Italy.

During this visit, the First Minister took part in a Dance for Parkinson's class, a flagship initiative of Scottish Ballet's Dance Health programme, delivered in partnership with Dance Base in seven hubs across the country. In Scotland, there are estimated to be 10,000 people who live with Parkinson's, and this number is set to increase. Dance can help people with Parkinson's physically, mentally and socially, aiding mobility and improving overall feelings of wellbeing. The success of the programme has led to the development of new initiatives for people living with dementia and Multiple Sclerosis.

After this, the First Minister took the opportunity to watch rehearsals for Scottish Ballet's second Digital Season, and the creation of a 'Work in a Week'. This process is being live streamed daily on Facebook, inviting a global audience into the rehearsal room. The new work is being created by Scottish Ballet's Artist in Residence, choreographer Sophie Laplane, and features company dancers as well as participants from the Youth Exchange. Sophie Laplane's most recent work for Scottish Ballet, *Dextera*, had its world premiere in Inverness in March to open the company's 50<sup>th</sup> year.

The First Minister also enjoyed watching rehearsals for Helen Pickett's *The Crucible*, based on the play by Arthur Miller. This gripping drama of power and persecution will have its world premiere at the Edinburgh International Festival before touring Scotland and the USA.

### **First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, said:**

'Scottish Ballet is a world-class performing company and I have seen first-hand how impressive they are, not only on stages in Scotland, but internationally too.'

‘The work they do off-stage is equally inspiring, particularly with regard to the dance classes for people with Parkinson’s, which make a real difference to lives across the country.

‘The additional funding announced today will allow Scottish Ballet to take their renowned performances on tour to the United States, and will also provide an opportunity for some of our most talented young dancers to benefit from an international exchange programme in Italy, further developing their experience and expertise.

‘Scottish Ballet has achieved an extraordinary amount in its 50 years, and it certainly has a very bright future ahead.’

**Christopher Hampson, CEO/Artistic Director of Scottish Ballet, said:**

‘We were delighted to welcome the First Minister to Scottish Ballet in our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. She has seen first-hand the extraordinary impact of our Dance Health programme, as well as our work developing young and emerging talent. We are extremely grateful for the additional funding which will enable us to continue to represent Scotland on the international stage.’

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

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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.
- 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 years.
- Scottish Ballet runs an extensive engagement programme, tailored to the needs of diverse communities, promoting confidence, fostering wellbeing and encouraging creativity through dance.
- Scottish Ballet’s Dance Health programme is for people living with neurological conditions Parkinson’s, dementia, and Multiple Sclerosis and is supported by Baillie Gifford. Dance for Parkinson’s 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 latest initiative for MS, ‘Elevate’ is supported by The RS MacDonald Charitable Trust.
- 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 Digital Season, *The Crucible* and the full anniversary

season, visit: [www.scottishballet.co.uk/50](http://www.scottishballet.co.uk/50)

- Scottish Ballet is funded by the Scottish Government.

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