

## **Scottish Ballet announces *Safe to Be Me™ Festival 2021* – a digital festival of dance for young people to celebrate diversity**

- World premiere of new dance film by Emmy Award-nominated filmmaker Fx Goby, exploring themes of pride and shame
- New dance film created in partnership with Scottish Ballet's Youth Exchange and Intercultural Youth Scotland
- Global call out for young people to submit 1-minute dance films, set to new music, responding to themes of acceptance, identity, and respect
- Dance and poetry workshops exploring themes of gender identity and family diversity
- Inspirational talks from Scottish Ballet dancers and industry role models

Today, Scottish Ballet announces the *Safe to Be Me™ Festival 2021* programme; a digital festival of dance to celebrate diversity, made possible with the support of Aberdeen Standard Investments.

Following the success of its schools programme, *Safe to Be Me™* moves online, launching as a digital festival on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May. Running throughout the month, it will see the company engage with young people aged 10 – 23 to deliver a series of digital dance sessions, inspirational talks and multi-artform workshops that explore identity, acceptance and respect.

Working directly with schools and community groups across Scotland, with opportunity for international engagement, the festival will present opportunities for young people to engage with the programme's focused areas of ableism, bigotry, family diversity, homophobia, racism, and transphobia. In line with key Scottish Government targets to address bullying, discrimination, and prejudice in

these areas, *Safe to Be Me*<sup>TM</sup> has been successfully delivered to over 1,000 young people since 2019.

This year's *Safe to Be Me*<sup>TM</sup> Festival has been programmed in consultation with *Conyach*, *Edinburgh International Festival*, *Intercultural Youth Scotland (IYS)*, *LGBT Youth Scotland* and *Sparkle – The National Transgender Charity*.

It will see Scottish Ballet use their practice in dance to inspire creative thinking and open up conversation, using movement as a tool to discuss and explore intersectional topic areas, in a programme that includes:

- The world premiere of a **new dance film created by Emmy Award-nominated filmmaker Fx Goby**, exploring themes of pride and shame through movement and dance.
- **A global callout inviting young people aged between 12 – 23 years old to create 1-minute dance films**, set to new music by young composers linked to IYS, responding to the festival's themes of acceptance, identity, and respect. 5 short films will have the chance to be shown during the festival, and the deadline for submissions is Friday 16 April 2021.
- **A collaboration between the dancers of Scottish Ballet Youth Exchange and composers of Intercultural Youth Scotland Block Beats to create 3-minute dance films** during the festival.
- **A series of inspiration talks from Scottish Ballet dancers and industry role models**, sharing their experiences of training, working in professional dance, and other areas of the sector; discussing creativity, motivation, and overcoming challenges.
- Creative workshops that introduce young people to **new solo dance works, performed by Scottish Ballet's dance artists, that invite discussion about family diversity**.
- **Dance and literary workshops that explore gender identity** by inviting participants to express themselves through 'dance at desk' sessions, before guiding young people in creating poetry in response to *Selkie / Secret Me* by Rachel Plummer.

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

‘At Scottish Ballet, we want to bring the benefits of dance to everyone and are excited that more people will have the opportunity to connect with the core values of *Safe to Be Me*<sup>TM</sup> by presenting it as a digital festival this year. As a company, we are committed to engaging with people from all backgrounds; using dance and movement as a tool to promote, understand and celebrate equality, diversity and inclusion across communities.’

**Catherine Cassidy, Director of Engagement at Scottish Ballet, said:**

‘We have been humbled to see the direct impact that *Safe to Be Me*<sup>TM</sup> has had in schools and hope that, by moving and expanding the programme online, that the Festival will continue to use creative and critical thinking to promote acceptance and respect, and celebrate diversity.’

**Lynne Connolly, Global Head of Inclusion and Diversity at Aberdeen Standard Investments, said:**

‘We’re thrilled to continue our support of the pioneering *Safe to Be Me*<sup>TM</sup> programme which acts as a powerful tool to help Scotland’s children develop compassion for others and confidence in themselves. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of Scottish Ballet we’ve been able to move the project online, using dance to engage with a wider group of young people, all with different backgrounds and different needs. Not only will the programme continue to encourage acceptance and inclusion amongst all the participants, it will help them prepare to thrive in an exponentially diverse world.’

**Khaleda Noon, Founder and Director of Intercultural Youth Scotland, said:**

‘Scottish Ballet’s *Safe to Be Me*<sup>TM</sup> Festival gives young people a great opportunity to create and express themselves, providing them a platform to create awareness and to showcase their talent in music, dance and film. IYS are glad to be partnered with Scottish Ballet in delivering projects safely through COVID and encouraging young people to continue creating and keeping their minds engaged through the lockdowns and recovery period.’

Scottish Ballet's *Safe to Be Me*<sup>TM</sup> project launched in 2019 and, it has since, engaged with over 1000 young people to help empower and support them in feeling safe and confident in who they are.

This has been achieved through the delivery of 54 dance workshops, to 37 schools across Scotland, with one young person noting that they:

‘learnt that you can be whoever you want to be, and it is okay to be who you are.’

Initially the project engaged with Primary 6 pupils, aged 9 – 11 but as the project moves online, the digital festival aims to widen accessibility and engagement through its broad programme of events this year.

*Safe to Be Me*<sup>TM</sup> has been supported by Aberdeen Standard Investments since 2019. The programme aligns with the company's core value of encouraging diversity, and their corporate vision to work towards a culture of inclusion where everyone is able to be fully themselves at work.

For more information about the *Safe to Be Me*<sup>TM</sup> *Festival* programme, and how to get involved visit: <https://www.scottishballet.co.uk/>

## **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

A press pack of assets, biographies, photographs and press release, is available for [download here](#).

### **Scottish Ballet press contact**

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### **@ScottishBallet**

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[scottishballet.co.uk](http://scottishballet.co.uk)

### **About Scottish Ballet**

- Scottish Ballet, founded in 1969, is Scotland's national dance company. Based in Glasgow, the company performs regularly across Scotland, 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, both on stage and screen.
- Scottish Ballet runs an extensive engagement programme, tailored to the needs of diverse communities, promoting confidence, fostering wellbeing and encouraging creativity through dance.
- *Safe to Be Me*<sup>TM</sup> is supported by Aberdeen Standard Investments.
- *Safe to Be Me*<sup>TM</sup> Festival has been programmed in consultation with *Conyach*, *Edinburgh International Festival*, *Intercultural Youth Scotland (IYS)*, *LGBT Youth Scotland* and *Sparkle – The National Transgender Charity*.
- Scottish Ballet is funded by the Scottish Government.

### **About Aberdeen Standard Investments**

- *Safe to Be Me*<sup>TM</sup> is supported by Aberdeen Standard Investments.
- Aberdeen Standard Investments is dedicated to enabling their clients to be better investors. They combine their global network of investment professionals with products and solutions across a broad range of markets, asset classes and investment strategies. Research, data and technology underpin the company's decision-making.
- Aberdeen Standard Investments manages a total of £456.9 bn (€510.4bn/US\$ 606.7 bn) of assets on behalf of governments, pension funds, insurers, companies, charities, foundations and individuals across 80 countries (as at 31 December 2020).
- The company's full range of solutions spans equities, multi-asset, fixed income, liquidity, alternatives, private markets and quantitative capabilities. Through a deep knowledge of local markets and the power of coordinated global oversight, Aberdeen Standard Investments drives better investment outcomes and deliver long-term sustainable benefits for all stakeholders.

- Responsible investment is in the company's DNA – and through leading ESG framework they aim to make a real-world impact and drive positive change. This means not only improving long-term returns, but also playing a part in building a world that is more sustainable, just, inclusive and diverse.

**ENDS**