

Northern Ballet

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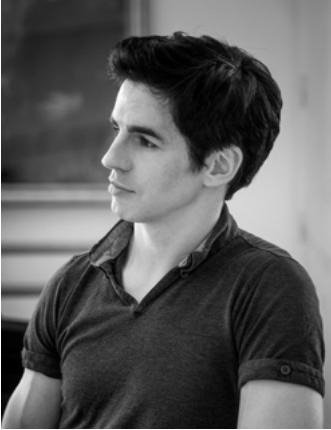


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Contents

<u>4</u>	<u>Welcome from Artistic Director, Federico Bonelli</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>Our spring 2023 season</u>
<u>8</u>	<u>Upcoming events autumn 2023</u>
<u>10</u>	<u>Meeting the Choreographers: <i>Sketches</i></u>
<u>12</u>	<u>Introducing David Collins</u>
<u>14</u>	<u>Capturing the Rhythm: George Liang</u>
<u>16</u>	<u>Company update</u>
<u>18</u>	<u>Rekindle the Romance: <i>Romeo & Juliet</i> Appeal</u>
<u>20</u>	<u>Spotlight; the tutus of <i>Paquita</i></u>
<u>22</u>	<u>Academy update</u>
<u>24</u>	<u>Learning update</u>
<u>26</u>	<u>What's on</u>





Federico's welcome

During our spring 2023 season, we have been busy working in the background to establish Northern Ballet's future now that we have our senior leadership team in place. I am delighted that earlier in the year we welcomed new Executive Director, [David Collins](#) who joined us from Opera North. Together we have been working closely to build on Northern Ballet's existing legacy of world-class dance. We are excited for you to join us on this journey.

In May I introduced *Sketches*, a programme dedicated to nurturing new choreographic talent. Six of our dancers were mentored by three established choreographers and presented their creations to an audience, alongside a new piece from Leeds-based choreographer Jamaal Burkmar.

This summer our inclusive dance festival *Expressions* returned, celebrating its tenth anniversary year. We enjoyed so many excellent performances, including the world-renowned Candoco, and premiered *Every Little Thing is a Change...* an original dance film featuring our Company dancers and participants from our Ability inclusive dance group.

Next up in the autumn will be our mixed programme *Generations: Three Short Ballets*, with new work from Tiler Peck and Benjamin Ella and featuring Hans van Manen's classic contemporary piece *Adagio Hammerklavier*. This sits alongside a tour of *Beauty & the Beast* and a special festive run of *The Nutcracker* at Leeds Grand Theatre, two of David Nixon CBE's best-loved ballets.

I am particularly excited about our announcement for spring 2024, when we will be reviving the Christopher Gable and Massimo Morricone 1991 classic [Romeo & Juliet](#). This work is a true cornerstone of Northern Ballet's repertoire, and I hope you will be able to help us to bring this timeless ballet back to life with the restoration work it requires through our [Rekindle the Romance](#) appeal.

And finally, we have our children's ballet to look forward to with performances of [Tortoise & the Hare](#) and our newest launch: [Northern Ballet Late](#), a series of informal ballet evenings at our home in the heart of Leeds, the first of which will take place in January.

As ever, the Development team and I would like to thank you for your generous support.

Best wishes,

Federico Bonelli
Artistic Director



Bethany McNaboe

We are deeply saddened to share the news that in June we lost a beloved colleague. During your time as supporters many of you will have had the privilege to meet Bethany McNaboe, our Head of Trusts & Foundations. Beth's warmth and openness not only made her a fantastic fundraiser, but a respected colleague and a treasured friend to so many who work at Northern Ballet, and this news has been a shock for the whole company.

If you would like to make a gift to support Beth's family through this difficult time, you can do so via [JustGiving](#).

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Our spring 2023 season

We were back on tour with a bang in the spring with a hugely successful run of *The Great Gatsby* in Leeds, Sheffield, and London, where every performance was a sell-out!

Our children's tour of *Ugly Duckling* continued across the UK, visiting over 20 local theatres to give children across the country the perfect opportunity to enjoy live ballet, music, and theatre for the first time.

In April we held a special Season Launch event where attendees got to see previews from *Beauty & The Beast*, *Romeo & Juliet*, and an incredibly special one-off performance of *Paquita*. If you missed it, you can watch the full Season Launch [right here](#).





Upcoming events

Patron events

Wednesday 23 August 2023
Open Rehearsal Day
Northern Ballet, Leeds

To RSVP for this event please contact Richard Cross
richard.cross@northernballet.com

Benefactor events

Wednesday 23 August 2023
Open Rehearsal Day
Northern Ballet, Leeds

Thursday 31 August 2023
Generations Rehearsal and Insight event
Northern Ballet, Leeds

Friday 8 September 2023
Generations: Three Short Ballets Opening Night
Northern Ballet, Leeds

Tuesday 31 October 2023
Generations: Three Short Ballets Opening Night
Linbury Theatre, London

To RSVP for any of these events, please contact Richard Cross
richard.cross@northernballet.com

Alternatively, the full performance dates are available on [our website](#).
We have Benefactor tickets on hold for every performance and may happily book your tickets for a date of your choice

We'll also be hosting our Annual Benefactors Dinner in the autumn - more details to follow!

Company class dates

Northern Ballet, Leeds, Saturday 16 September 2023, 11.00am
Nottingham Theatre Royal, Saturday 7 October 2023, 11.30am
Linbury Theatre, London, Thursday 2 November 2023, 11.00am
Newcastle Theatre Royal, Saturday 11 November 2023, 11.30am
Norwich Theatre Royal, Saturday 25 November, 11.30am
Leeds Grand Theatre, Saturday 9 December 2023, 11.00am

[Book online now](#)

Spring 2024 dates are also available to book.

As a working ballet company, all events remain subject to change.





Joseph Taylor and Dominique Larose in rehearsal for *Three Short Ballets*.
Photo Emily Nuttall.

Sketches

Meet the Choreographers

Sketches is a new series at Northern Ballet devised by Artistic Director, Federico Bonelli, in his pursuit to develop and nurture new voices and artists in dance. The first iteration of *Sketches* was held in May and featured an eclectic selection of pieces choreographed by six of Northern Ballet's own dancers, alongside a new piece by award-winning Leeds-based choreographer Jamaal Burkmar, all performed by fellow members of the Company.

The dancer-choreographers took part in several creative workshops where they were mentored by three established choreographers: [Mthuthuzeli November](#), choreographer of *Wailers*; [Kenneth Tindall](#), choreographer of *Casanova*; and Sharon Watson MBE DL, CEO & Principal of [Northern School of Contemporary Dance](#).

[George Liang](#) and [Bruno Serraclara](#), two of our emerging choreographers in question, share an insight into their process and inspiration for their respective pieces.

How did you discover your passion for choreography?

Bruno: During my school years we were given opportunities to improvise during class and to create very small and short choreographies for ourselves. I found it quite hard to create on the spot, but I enjoyed it and since then I have always preferred to create for a piece of music that I really like and that inspires me.

Can you share some of your major influences and inspirations behind your piece created for *Sketches*?

George: My work is called *Out of Breath*. I wanted to use this concept to explore different types of breath. I chose this concept because I am a person who has many ambitions, and as a Virgo, I like to achieve a lot of things, in life or even in one day sometimes. By doing that I often feel out of breath!



Bruno: My main inspiration for my piece was the music that I chose. It is three pieces of very different music, so the steps had to go according to the mood of it. There is a romantic and sad melody from Verdi's music, nostalgic yet sensual from Lana del Rey, and a blast of energy and overwhelming feeling from *Matsuri-Shake*. My inspiration for the steps came from very different places as well, it can be from a character from a movie that does something intriguing, or from the weird position a statue was in at a museum, or from other choreographers I've worked with in the past.



What are your aspirations and goals as a choreographer? How do you see your work evolving and growing in the future?

George: I would love to continue the journey as a choreographer. I hope to build on what I already have and continue to find my own voice and style in my work. I had such a blast creating in the studio with my colleagues. Hopefully, it won't be too long until the next time I create something.

Bruno: My aspiration would be to make the audience feel something they don't usually feel. Reaching out with stories they can relate to and feel emotional about, or simply have a good evening and forget about their problems. I hope I get another opportunity to choreograph because it is something I really enjoy doing and I have many ideas for future choreographies.



*Bruno is sponsored by Julian Maitland.
George is sponsored by Paul & Diane Cusworth.*



Introducing David Collins

[David Collins](#) joined Northern Ballet in January of this year from Opera North, where he was Executive Director and Deputy CEO. In that role he led the fundraising campaign for the company's major capital project to create the Howard Opera Centre and transform the Howard Assembly Room as a performance venue with new public spaces in the heart of Leeds.

David's arrival came at an exciting time for Northern Ballet, looking to the future under the artistic leadership of Federico Bonelli, who took over as the company's new Artistic Director in May 2022, and the chairmanship of Guy Perricone, who joined in July 2022. Together they have announced an exciting programme of work for the 2023/2024 season with three overarching themes; creating stories that connect, developing new voices and artists and sharing the joy of dance with everyone.

Below David shares with us his thoughts about Northern Ballet and his vision for the future.

What made you want to work for Northern Ballet?

Ever since I moved to Yorkshire seven years ago, I've been an admirer of Northern Ballet's work, creating stories that speak to audiences of all ages, always delivered to the highest standard by a company of incredibly talented dancers and musicians. The chance to move across Leeds from Opera North to learn in detail about a new artform was one that I couldn't resist.

I'm incredibly fortunate to have worked in roles across theatre, opera and now ballet, and relish the chance to gain a deeper understanding of each. Growing up I was very lucky to have an uncle who took it upon himself to introduce me to all three artforms, inviting me to join him regularly to watch productions in London.

When I got my first role at a music festival in London, followed by the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford, my uncle Michael would always be a regular guest as we continued to share notes on what we saw. Sadly, he died a few years ago, but of those artforms I know ballet was his first love.

He took me to my first ever ballet (a MacMillan triple bill), and as I've joined the company, learning about the intricacies of ballet, I've done so imagining what Michael would make of this new adventure.

It's an exciting time in the company with a new senior leadership team now in place – what are you most excited about going forward for Northern Ballet as an organisation?

Northern Ballet has a well-earned reputation for creating high quality ballets from a wide range of inspirations. It's notable when I talk to audiences or peers in the industry how much affection there is for this company.

Looking to the future Federico wants to build on those foundations by creating new stories that connect with people across the UK, by championing new artists to create that work and by sharing the joy of participation in dance with everyone.

Every day when I walk into the building at Quarry Hill, I have the pleasure of meeting people young and old enthused by the dance classes they are attending, it's infectious!

After being here for a few months, what has been the most surprising thing to you about Northern Ballet?

The sheer number of people who dance with the company, in our building and in schools and communities across the north. From young people hoping to pursue a career in dance, to those just trying something new, the range of people we reach is astounding, all of them united by the joy of dancing.

What are your goals and visions for Northern Ballet for the immediate future, and long term?

We are intent on finding new stories to tell through ballet, stories that people find thrilling, entertaining and moving in equal measure. To do that we want to find a range of new choreographic, musical and other artistic voices to help us create work that really connects with our audiences.

At the same time, we want to focus on the whole breadth of the company's work from the Academy, Learning and the various outreach programmes building around those narratives, so that we can make a real impact in people's lives both through the work they experience on stage, and through their own creativity by dancing with us.

At the season launch one of the themes you highlighted was the joy of dance, which ballet brings you the most joy?

Well, I certainly enjoyed experiencing *The Great Gatsby* with audiences in Leeds, Sheffield and London, but I'd have to say that since I joined Northern Ballet the most joyous piece of dance I have seen is our new film *Every Little Thing is a Change*. It's been created by members of our Ability course and company dancers. It was released online during Expressions, our inclusive dance festival, and it's truly life affirming.

Capturing the Rhythm with George Liang

Dancer George Liang joined Northern Ballet in 2018 from the National Ballet of Canada. If you've been to see a Northern Ballet production in the past five years you will be familiar with George's work on stage in roles such as George Wilson in *The Great Gatsby* and Lyr, Lord of the Sea in *The Little Mermaid*, but did you know that some of the Northern Ballet photographs that you see are by George? With a keen interest in photography, for the last year he has been our Associate Photographer in Residence, capturing moments behind the scenes, in addition to his own work. As his stint in this position comes to an end, George joins us to tell us about his practice.



How do you approach capturing the fluidity and movement of dance in a still photograph?

Fluidity is something that is quite hard to capture, that is why live performance is so exciting, and it is something that is difficult to capture as a photograph. I love to play around with my camera using long exposure. The camera's shutter is open for a lengthy period of time resulting in an image that captures the trail of moving objects in front of the camera, while some elements are still razor sharp.

Are there specific challenges or considerations unique to photographing dancers compared to other subjects?

Dancers are very aware of their body position. I find myself good at directing photoshoots when I am shooting non-dancers. It's an interesting journey to help people be comfortable in front of the camera.

Can you share a memorable experience you've had while photographing here at Northern Ballet?

The most memorable moment for me is shooting the rehearsal process of our Made in Leeds triple bill. Being able to document these moments while dancing in the triple bill myself was special.

How did you become interested in photography?

I have always enjoyed taking photos from my phone. I love to document my life through photography. I bought my first professional photography camera about 4 years ago and since then I've learned a lot and taken lots of photographs for my colleagues and work commissions.

What aspects of dance do you find most inspiring to capture through photography?

I love capturing moments in the air. All kinds of jumps are so interesting but also challenging to capture and the result is extremely rewarding.

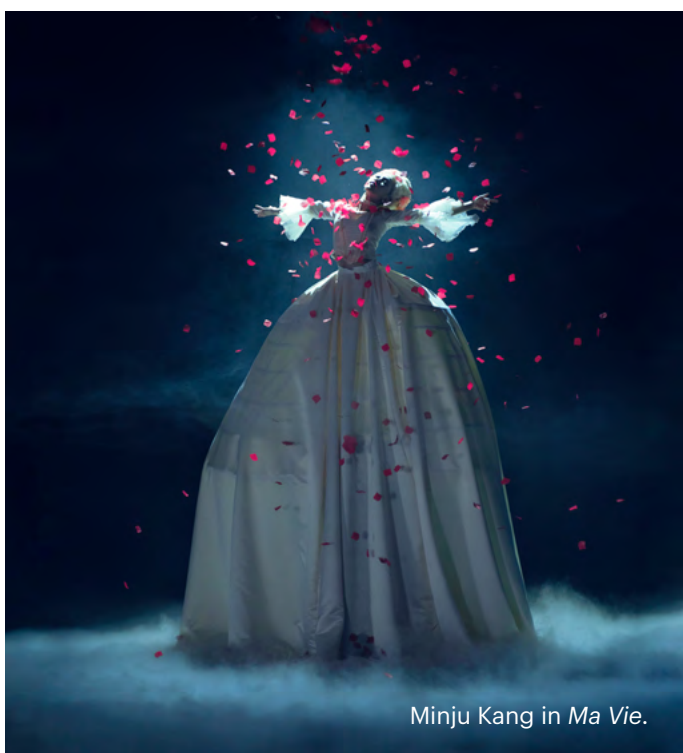
Can you share any tips or techniques for capturing emotion and storytelling in dance photography?

For capturing an emotion, I would usually take more close-up pictures where you would be able to capture the eyes and expression of the subject. For a storytelling ballet you would pick some of the signature steps to photograph that represent the important scenes of the story.

George is sponsored by Paul & Diane Cusworth.



Alessandra Bramante and Jackson Dwyer in *The Nutcracker*.



Minju Kang in *Ma Vie*.



Northern ballet dancers in *Wailers*.



Julie Nunes and Filippo Di Vilio in *The Nutcracker*.

Company update



Jonathan Lo



Mackenzie Jacob



Sean Bates



Gavin McCaig



Katherine Lee



Wesley Branch



Joseph Taylor



Dominique Larose



Jonathan Hanks



Alessandra Bramante



Saeka Shirai



Harris Beattie



Abigail Prudames

We want to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate Johnny Lo whose time at Northern Ballet has come to an end as he starts his role as Music Director at Australian Ballet.

Similarly wishing the best to our Director of Planning, Tobias Perkins who is also going international as the newly appointed Executive Director at Royal New Zealand Ballet.

We want to say a fond farewell to the following dancers who are going on to pastures new and we wish them well for the future: Mackenzie Jacob now dances for [Scottish Ballet](#), Katharine Lee for [San Francisco Ballet](#) and Sean Bates for [Zurich Ballet](#). Gavin McCaig has retired from performing and joins the Young Dancers Academy in London as Director of Business Operations, and Wesley Branch has also left the company.

[Joseph Taylor](#) will be promoted to Premier Dancer, [Jonathan Hanks](#), [Saeka Shirai](#) and [Dominique Larose](#) to Leading Soloist and [Alessandra Bramante](#) and [Harris Beattie](#) to Coryphée.

In other exciting news Aaron Kok will join the Company as a Dancer, Mayuko Iwanaga and Yu Wakizuka as Apprentices and Itsuki Amemiya also as an Apprentice until December.

Congratulations are in order for Premier Dancer [Abigail Prudames](#) who is currently on maternity leave after welcoming a beautiful baby boy to her family.

Northern
Ballet



REKINDLE THE ROMANCE

Romeo & Juliet Appeal

Can you help to bring our star-crossed lovers back to life?

Northern Ballet's beloved 1991 production of *Romeo & Juliet*, directed by Christopher Gable and choreographed by Massimo Morricone, was damaged in a devastating river flood in 2015.

Your donation to the Rekindle the Romance appeal will go towards restoring, repairing, and updating this timeless ballet, a true cornerstone of our history. Future generations of passionate ballet fans can enjoy this production thanks to your support.

Rekindle the Romance today: Scan the QR code to donate or text **BALLET** to **70460** to donate £5.

Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message.



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Northern Ballet registered charity number 259140. Company registration number 947096. Northern Ballet Limited registered in England and Wales. Northern Ballet, 2 St. Cecilia Street, Leeds, LS2 7PA. Amber Lewis and Joseph Taylor in *Romeo & Juliet*. Photo Guy Farrow.

Rekindle the Romance Appeal

This version of *Romeo & Juliet* was last performed by the company thirteen years ago in 2010. As we look towards the future, we want to celebrate our history and heritage as a world-class storytelling ballet company. What better way to tell our story than by those who have been on the journey with us?

Here are a handful of your memories that you have shared with us so far! If you've yet to submit yours, let us know what you remember and enjoyed about this production on [our webpage](#).

"I first saw Northern Ballet's *Romeo & Juliet* on Wednesday, 20 February 1991 at the Alhambra Theatre Bradford. Romeo was danced by Anthony Harith, Juliet, Vincianne Ghysens and Mercutio, Ferguson Logan. I was so bowled over by the production I immediately signed up to be a friend to find out more about the Company which was then based in my hometown of Halifax. I have been a friend, then Patron and now Benefactor ever since. To say I am happy about it being resurrected is an absolute understatement."

-Dianne Balmforth

"I first saw this production on Christmas tv and just loved it, especially the opening which was different from the usual (the standard intro seems to me to start "in the middle of the music") so when it came to the Opera House in Belfast, I made sure I was there. The settings, costumes, orchestra, acting and, of course the dancing all made a deep impression. That performance stayed vividly in my memory for all sorts of reasons, not least that it was the last occasion I was in a theatre with my mother. I was at the Coliseum in London (at a Cuban ballet performance) when I saw a girl wearing a Northern Ballet top - I got chatting to her, as a fellow NB fan and we agreed that Northern Ballet's *Romeo & Juliet* was the definitive version."

-Joyce Ann MacCafferty

"I took my daughter to see it in Cardiff, she was about 16 (she's nearly 46 now) she didn't know the story, and when it got to the bit where Juliet finds Romeo dead, I turned and saw the tears streaming down my daughter's face. It was magical. I remember the costumes for the dance of the knights, black, red and gold. So magnificent. Every time I hear that music, I see those costumes."

-Eirwen Godfrey



Spotlight on the tutus of *Paquita*



For our Season Launch event we wanted to mark the special occasion of Federico Bonelli's first full season at the company with a one-off performance. *Paquita* is a ballet that was first staged in Paris in 1846, with music composed by Edouard Deldevez and Ludwig Minkus.

One of the most iconic elements of *Paquita* are the tutus, adorned with intricate gold or silver embroidery, conveying elegance, grace, and beauty. Over the years, Northern Ballet has become known for hardly ever performing in tutus and tights, so creating these traditional, classical tutus was an exciting prospect for our wardrobe department. Julie Anderson, Costume Cutter & Maker and Becky Smith, Assistant Costume Maker share with us the process of bringing the *Paquita* tutus to life.

"The tutus that we worked with for *Paquita* were originally made for the 30th gala in 2009. To produce a tutu and bodice from scratch you can be looking at 7 to 10 days, and we just didn't have the time. Through recycling in this way, we managed to complete a tutu and bodice in under 3 days."



Step One

“Firstly, each layer of net was starched and steamed flat. We then added two extra layers of stiff net, a wide layer which had an extra channel included to add a steel hoop and a shorter layer. The waist band was replaced as the elastic had gone. The layers of net were then tacked together to hold them in place.”



Step Two

“We then made an additional layer or plate which was made up of a layer of stiff net, a sparkle tulle net and silver lace.”



Step Three

“The lace is then placed on the tulle and stitched. The plate is then attached to the tutu, and we made these easily removable just in case they want to be used again. The final stage in the process is reattaching the bodice to the tutu.”

“As we don’t work with tutus very often at Northern Ballet, it was nice to work on the project and we all enjoyed it. Tutus have specific math and methods, and the only creative bit of the process is the top plate and bodice. The beauty of working on many of Northern Ballet’s costumes is that we get to push boundaries in the cutting and making stage.”



Academy update

This spring we have delivered 33 Spotted! Outreach workshops in Doncaster and Bradford. We also held a Masterclass at CAST in Doncaster with a dedicated session for Spotted! students alongside students with previous ballet experience

During the company's performances of *The Nutcracker* in December 2022 many of our students had the opportunity to perform on stage. 24 students from our Centre for Advanced Training programme were the party children, and the mice were danced by 15 children from our open classes, alongside 7 pupils from our Kittens and CAT foundation programmes.

Trainees from the Graduate Programme have also had many performance opportunities, performing in both *The Great Gatsby* and *Ugly Duckling* with the Company throughout these tours.

Our CAT students were also extremely excited to be the opening act at the season launch event in the spring.

And congratulations to this year's CAT graduates who have places at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, English National Ballet, Hamburg, and Trinity Laban to name a few!





Learning update

In a company first, spring 2023 saw Northern Ballet Company dancers and participants from our Ability course for dancers with additional learning support needs join forces to work with choreographer Ben Wright on the creation of a pioneering dance film. Developed over a series of workshops, *Every Little Thing is a Change* is a joyful celebration of connection, dance and movement which explores how a touch, a look or a feeling can transport us into another world.

"I am extremely proud to have been invited to make this short work with Northern Ballet, a company who are clearly centralising a rationale to make art to further equality, representation, and diversity as a primary objective. That is no mean feat, particularly for a ballet company."

-Ben Wright, Choreographer and Director.

Ben's intention was "to create a safe, playfully creative, and inclusive space, to support the individual identities of the artists or collaborators." He views inclusivity as "a way of seeing and re-seeing – it's a choice, a verb, I don't believe it is a fixed position – it is a process."

Artistic Director Federico Bonelli agrees. "It is sometimes said that it is all about the result. This project is a great example that this is not true, and that we don't have to sacrifice the process to get a great result. Every time I walked into the studio and later, on stage, it was clear to me that both the process and the result were going to be great!"

Collaborating across Northern Ballet departments was new for the Ability dancers. One aspect they enjoyed most was having their hair, make-up and costumes created by our Wardrobe team. Led by Carley Marsh and Harriet Rogers, the team used designs by the Ability and company dancers. "(They) really helped us to understand and relate to them as individuals. The process became very organic, which was very fitting for the piece itself. This also allowed for some flexibility on the filming days depending on the dancers' comfort levels. We really enjoyed the organic nature of this project as it really allowed us to be innovative in what we were creating."

The workshop and filming days were not without their challenges. Liam Verity, Head of Communications, was "slightly apprehensive about the process, as film shoots can be a little frantic, so it was important that we had the right personalities involved to be flexible and calm through whatever opportunities and challenges might arise." New people, situations and change can be difficult for some of the



Ability dancers. Megan expressed how “getting used to change in the lighting” was difficult and, combined with obstacles in the wings such as snow machines, made her feel like she was going to trip up, causing anxiety. Being heavily visual and kinesthetic learners, the Ability dancers can struggle with the predominance of verbal communication to explain tasks and expectations which prompted creative thinking from Liam and the filmmaking team, “Of course, we had to prepare for the additional needs of the dancers and the schedule had to be flexible to get the most out of each day. But the enthusiasm and joy in the room made it unlike any other project – such positive energy throughout.”

The Ability dancers valued working in a professional environment, “as one” with the wider company. As Ben explains, “treat people like professionals and it’s my experience that they behave as such. Ability and their team of astonishing support workers contributed constantly to the makeup of the project. We built a cohesive team which saw the Northern Ballet artists flying in the same universe as the Ability dancers and vice versa.”



What's on

Generations: Three Short Ballets

8 Sep 2023 – 16 Sep 2023

Leeds Stanley & Audrey Burton Theatre

31 Oct 2023 – 2 Nov 2023

London Linbury Theatre at Royal Opera House

Beauty & the Beast

4 Oct 2023 – 7 Oct 2023

Nottingham Theatre Royal

7 Nov 2023 – 11 Nov 2023

Newcastle Theatre Royal

21 Nov 2023 – 25 Nov 2023

Norwich Theatre Royal

4 Jun 2024 – 9 Jun 2024

Leeds Grand Theatre

The Nutcracker

29 Nov 2023 – 10 Dec 2023

Leeds Grand Theatre

Romeo & Juliet

8 Mar 2024 – 16 Mar 2024

Leeds Grand Theatre

2 Apr 2024 – 6 Apr 2024

Sheffield Lyceum Theatre

30 Apr 2024 – 4 May 2024

Nottingham Theatre Royal

14 May 2024 – 18 May 2024

Norwich Theatre Royal

28 May 2024 – 1 Jun 2024

London Sadler's Wells

