

Northern Ballet

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The magazine from Northern Ballet



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Welcome from Artistic Director, Federico Bonelli

2024 started with a bang, with our children's ballet *Tortoise & the Hare* hopping on stage to a full house at the Linbury Theatre at the Royal Opera House in January followed by our long-awaited revival of our audience favourite production of *Romeo & Juliet*.

You can read more about how our dancers and creative teams prepared for the production's return on page 12, but I can say with certainty that over the last year every member of our Company has worked tirelessly to bring this landmark production back to life after the sets and costumes were devastated by floods in 2015. Thank you to each and every one of you who has donated to our Rekindle the Romance appeal to bring the production back to life. We couldn't have done it without you!

Looking ahead this year, we will be reviving another piece of Northern Ballet history with *A Christmas Carol*, by Christopher Gable CBE and Massimo Moricone, alongside a newly commissioned trio of short ballets. I'm also very proud that *Sketches* will be returning in May, showcasing the choreographic talents of five artists from Northern Ballet and Carlos Pons Guerra (DeNada Dance Theatre). For those of you who missed it last year, this is dance in its purest form, direct from our home in Leeds – I hope you will join us this time round!

As ever, the Development team and I would like to thank you for your generous support. I am looking forward to seeing you at the theatre at some point during our tour this year.

Best wishes,

Federico Bonelli
Artistic Director

*Federico Bonelli's position as Artistic Director
is generously supported by Aud Jepsen*



Welcome to the team!

We're delighted to introduce three new members of the Northern Ballet Development team.

Our new Director of Development, **Lynne Farnell**, joined us late last year. She is passionate about ballet, the arts and education and joins us from previous roles as Head of Development at Buxton Opera House and Deputy Director of Development at the Royal Northern College of Music.

Lynne is joined by two other more recent new starters.

Danielle Sharma-Pay joins the team as our new Head of Trusts and Foundations, following a senior development role at Turner Contemporary and a successful freelance career securing grants for a variety of cultural and education projects.

Supporters who regularly come into our Quarry Hill Headquarters may already know **Georgia McKie**, who was previously our Head Receptionist. Georgia will now be bringing her expertise to her new role as our Events and Partnership Executive.

'This is such a critically important and exciting time for Northern Ballet, and we're thrilled to join Zoë, Rich and the rest of the Northern Ballet team. We look forward to building warm relationships with our supporters and to growing our philanthropic income to enable us to create, perform and share our wonderful ballets and to support our transformative education and inclusive dance programme to reach and benefit as many people as possible.' **Lynne Farnell**

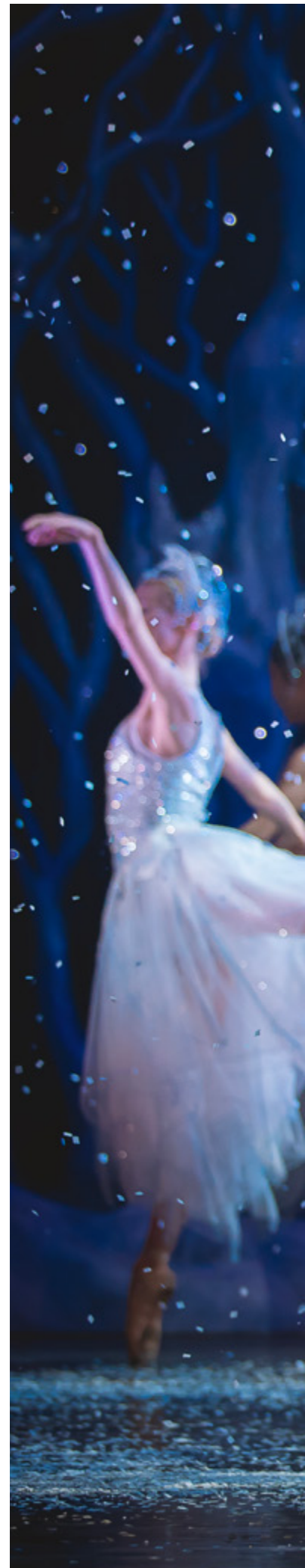
We look forward to getting to know you all soon!



Autumn 2023 in pictures



Top: Dancers of Northern Ballet in *Beauty & the Beast*. Photo Tristram Kenton.
Bottom: Harris Beattie and Bruno Serraclara in *The Nutcracker*. Photo Emily Nuttall.



Top: Kirica Takahashi and Jun Ishii in *Generations: Three Short Ballets*. Photo Emily Nuttall.
Bottom: Kevin Poeung and Dominique Larose in *Beauty & the Beast*. Photo Tristram Kenton.



Alessia Petrosino in *The Nutcracker*.
Photo Emily Nuttall.

Northern Ballet has

- 108 employees, including
- 37 Company dancers

On Stage 2023

- 161 performances
- 30+ venues
- 85,000+ audience reached
- 1,000+ free tickets distributed, removing barriers to access
- 7 early-career choreographers mentored to develop and perform new work

RAISING THE BARRE

Our annual impact in numbers

Thanks to the generosity of all our supporters and funders over the last year, we have been able to continue performing and touring world-class ballet, nurturing talent through our Academy and sharing the joy of dance with people of all ages, across the UK. We hope that these facts and figures demonstrate the far-reaching impact of the ambitious work that your support makes possible:

Academy

The Academy of Northern Ballet continues to be the leading centre of excellence for dance training in the North of England. In the academic year 2022/23 we delivered the following:

- 1,000+ students took part in classes across our open and professional programmes
- 48 Academy students received bursaries in 2022/23
- 2,000+ primary school pupils engaged in free Spotted! workshops across 22 schools
- 800+ open classes including adult courses, drop-in sessions, children's classes and workshops for over 55s

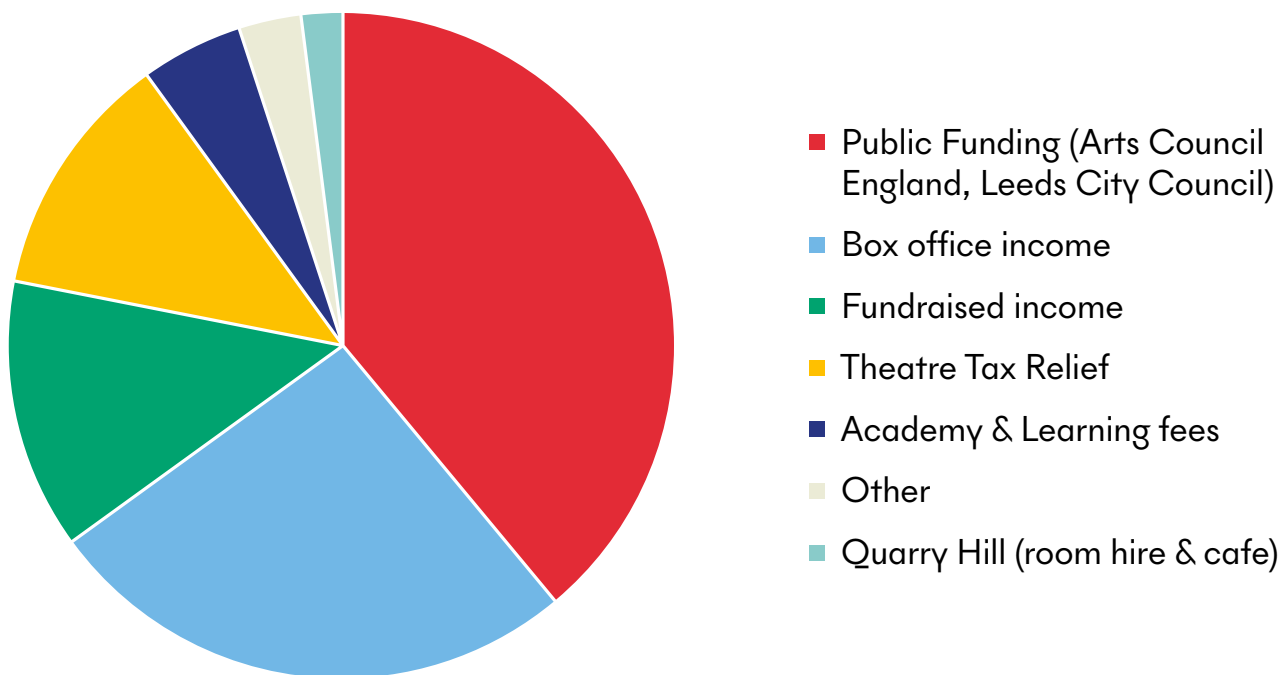
Learning

We believe in the power of dance to improve people's physical and mental wellbeing, no matter their age or ability. Northern Ballet delivers outreach in schools, as well as bespoke programmes for adults with mild to moderate learning disabilities, wheelchair users and people affected by Parkinson's disease. In the academic year 2022/23 we delivered the following:

- 7,000+ individuals engaged
- 800+ outreach sessions delivered
- 4,998 children engaged in free outreach sessions as part of our Children's Ballet tour
- 96 schools worked with
- 200+ dancers with disabilities performed in Expressions, our annual festival of inclusive dance

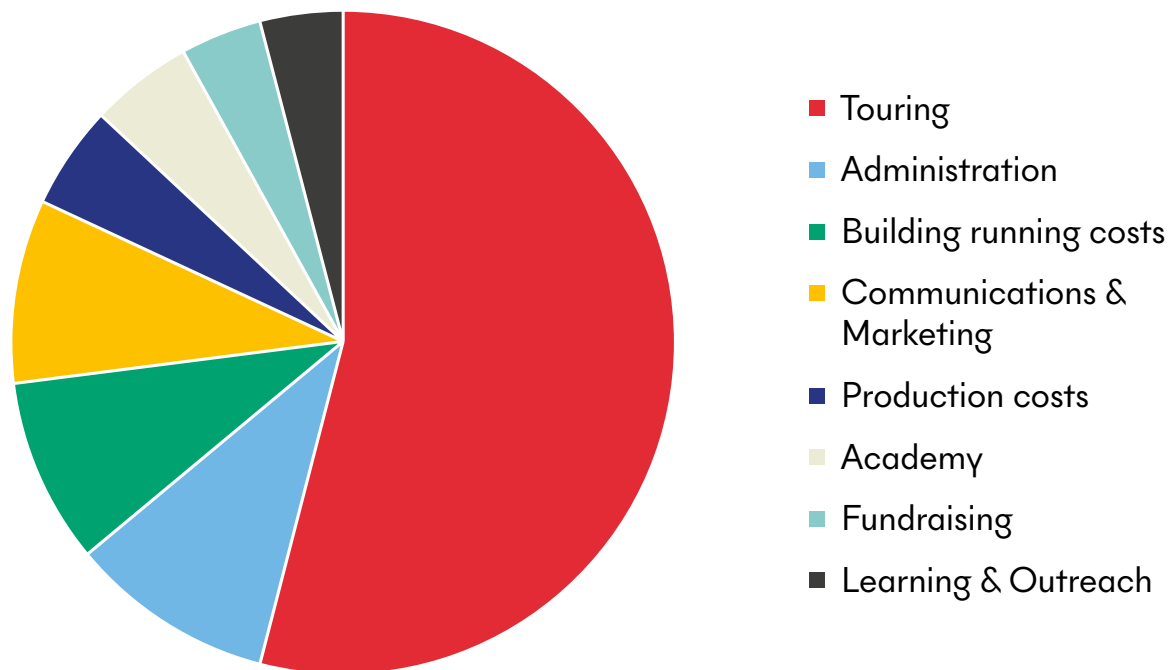
Income:

Northern Ballet is a registered charity. The diagrams below show how we generate income and where this money goes. After public funding and box office, fundraising represents the most significant portion of our overall income:



Expenditure:

We are the UK's widest touring ballet company and the vast majority of our expenditure is directly associated with bringing world-class ballet to as many people and places as possible:




Every gift we receive contributes to this picture and we hope this insight demonstrates how vital your ongoing support is to Northern Ballet.



FALLING BACK IN LOVE:

Reviving *Romeo & Juliet*



The task of reviving Christopher Gable CBE and Massimo Moricone's iconic production of *Romeo & Juliet* has required exceptional effort from every member of Northern Ballet. After suffering extensive damage to the sets and costumes following devastating floods in 2015, forcing the show into early retirement, it has taken the utmost amount of care to restore the production to its former beauty and pass on the landmark love story. So, where to begin when restoring a masterpiece?

Choosing the Production

Christopher Gable CBE and Massimo Moricone's *Romeo & Juliet* first premièred in 1992 at Leeds Grand Theatre. Receiving critical acclaim, *Romeo & Juliet* has remained in the hearts of audiences across the world. The connection to the story of two young lovers runs deep, not only for our audiences, but within our Company also. Federico was invited to perform the famous balcony pas de deux for Northern Ballet's 50 anniversary gala back in 2020. Recognising how integral the ballet is to the company's history, Federico's decision to revive *Romeo & Juliet* has delighted company members to be able to share this labour of love with audiences once again.

Learning to Love

Former director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Sir Gregory Doran paid us a visit to teach us how to fall into the world of fair Verona where we lay our scene. With copies of The Bard's play in hand, Sir Gregory guided company members through the intricacies of Shakespearean language as they delved deeper into their characters.



“It’s an expression of love in its highest form”

- Daniel de Andrade, Artistic Associate

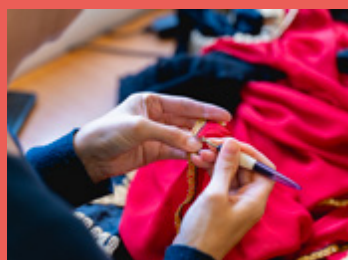
Bringing Back the Memories

Standing the test of time, *Romeo & Juliet* has remained a cherished gem. This January, The University of Leeds’ Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery unveiled a new exhibition drawing together props, costumes and photographs from the production. The exhibit tells the story of how Northern Ballet created a classic portrayal of Shakespeare’s timeless tragedy. Our very own former Romeo and Artistic Associate Daniel de Andrade welcomed guests in the gallery with an evening of sharing his experience of performing the iconic role. Daniel gave rich insights into what it was like working with Christopher Gable, how he prepared to bare his soul on the stage, and how he has gone about passing on his knowledge to the new generation of storytellers in rehearsals.



Saving our Sets

In true Shakespearean style, *Romeo & Juliet* has battled tragedies of fires and floods. Rather than starting from scratch, our Technical team have been working tirelessly to repair and restore the original set to its former glory as intended by designer Lez Brotherston OBE. We went along to the team's home at Northern Ballet's stores in Bramley to see how their expertise has breathed new life into the set pieces and props. From restorative metal work, meticulous recreations of original painting, to even utilising new 3-D printing technology, the team's masterful skills and knowledge have made the production sing with vibrancy once again.



“Audiences continue to connect with this story, because we as humans continue to fall in love”

- Jayne Regan Pink



From Storyteller to Storyteller

Whilst preparing for the revival we have had dancers of the 1991 production join us in the studio to help pass down the legacy. Both William Walker and Jayne Regan Pink, the original Romeo and Juliet, were there to share their knowledge of the production, helping us recapture the drama of the ballet and instilling the passion for our 2024 production.





Learning update

In October we launched a new project in three schools for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Yorkshire. Rise and Shine is a two-year pilot project which has been generously funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. The pilot work builds on our hugely successful schools project Rise, which works with 320 nine-to-ten-year-olds from 7 schools across West Yorkshire, using Northern Ballet repertoire to allow pupils to explore their own self-expression and identity through dance and music.

Rise and Shine is led by Northern Ballet's Community Dance Artists, alongside supporting artists with lived experience of disability and specialist Music Therapists and covers the full academic year with weekly sessions in school for students to explore movement, music and creativity.

The project culminates in a wonderful opportunity for the students to 'shine', by taking part in a performance of *Expressions* at the Stanley & Audrey Burton Theatre, alongside professional disabled dancers and other inclusive community dance groups.

The funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation also allows us to work with Dr Louise McDowall, a Research Fellow in Exercise and Health Psychology from the University of Leeds. Louise will be conducting research alongside the project to allow us to understand and demonstrate the impact of the project for the participants and their school staff.





It's never too late to learn to dance!

Our very own Development Executive Richard Cross has been taking part in our Open Ballet Classes for adults this season.

We caught up with him to see how he has been getting on.

What inspired you to start taking class?

In a bid to get fitter over the summer I started running again after a long break. As winter approached (and the rain), I was looking for other activities to mix it up a bit.

A lot of our supporters take part in the Open Classes in the building and have suggested I join in, so I thought I would give it a go!

In my day-to-day work at Northern Ballet, I often meet supporters and audience members who are new to ballet, so I also thought getting to grips with the terminology and the fundamentals would give me a bit of an advantage when meeting new people at our events.

What is the class like? And what have you learnt so far?

The beginner classes take place on Mondays at 6.45pm, so work well when working full-time and needing to travel to Leeds.

Each class consists of a warm-up to get the blood flowing, then we typically start with exercises at the barre, before moving on to centre work. The atmosphere is friendly, laid back, and everyone is invited to go at their own pace and ask questions as we go.

Sara Horner, our teacher, is lovely and great at explaining everything and making it accessible.

We started at the beginning by learning the feet positions 1st, 2nd and 3rd, and last week we added 4th. We have also learned the proper requirements around posture, turnout and placing. At the barre we started with Demi and Grand Plié and have worked through a whole host of exercises with our most recent being Développé. In the centre we have covered Port de Bras, Sauté, Galop, Glissade, Temps Levé, and Balancé. We are now working towards combining the movements we have learnt to create an enchaînement (a linked sequence of steps or movements), emphasising how much everyone on the course has learnt and achieved so far. By adding the steps together to form slightly more intricate exercises, the aim is that we will feel prepared to continue to participate in more adult ballet classes in the future.



Have you enjoyed it? And have you felt much benefit day to day?

I have really enjoyed taking part. Following class, I feel very refreshed, and it is a great workout. Mondays are always fairly hectic with lots of meetings, so it is also a great way to unwind and recharge. I have also noticed that my posture has improved considerably, which has helped in my running. On my run route home there is about a mile climb up a hill and the ballet classes have helped with my core strength, and I am getting much quicker at running up the hill!

Experiencing ballet firsthand has given me an even greater appreciation of our Company and all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes in bringing the work into the community, which will help me in my day-to-day work with the fundraising team.

What have you found most challenging?

When you are concentrating hard on the moves, I find a lot of the terminology flies over my head a bit (I was never good at French at school!), so I sometimes find myself struggling to refer back to exercises that we have done previously without seeing them visually first. Sara has helpfully provided us all with a list of all the vocabulary and, whenever we repeat an exercise, we are always given time for a recap as well.

I have such respect for the dancers in the Company. I am lucky enough to be able to pop into the Company's regular daily class and rehearsals every so often as part of my job, and they make it look so easy and must have such incredible memory skills; they are so talented.

Will you continue?

Absolutely! I have the bug now and I have really enjoyed taking part.

One of my favorite things about working for Northern Ballet is its approach to making ballet and the arts accessible to everyone, regardless of their background. Ballet is often seen as an elite art form, but there is such a sense of community and family at Northern Ballet in which everyone is welcome to come together and take part.

My job is to be an advocate for the Company and make sure our supporters can have as close a relationship to the Company and our dancers as possible, so they want to keep supporting us. Taking part in the classes has shown me what an important role that is, as Northern Ballet is a valuable part of the community in which we are all lucky to be a part of and support.

Are there other adult classes?

As well as the Beginner classes as an introduction to ballet, the Academy also offers two more regular adult classes for various experience levels. There are also classes for over 55s and regular drop-in sessions and pop-ups, all alongside regular outreach work in the community.

There is no excuse to not get more involved... See you there!

For more information on our adult classes visit our website



Behind the lens:

Meet our Leading Soloist come TikTok content creator, Amber Lewis

Amber joined Northern Ballet in 2022 after previously dancing with Hong Kong Ballet.

Alongside her busy schedule of rehearsals and performances, Amber has also been exploring another angle to her creativity in producing content for Northern Ballet's TikTok.

Amber joined us to tell us about the world of TikTok trends and how she's been capturing the behind-the-scenes life of a dancer at Northern Ballet.

Watch one of
Amber's Ballet
Step Fridays
here

How did the Northern Ballet TikTok start?

So, this time last year, I got an injury whilst we were on tour. I had to be with the Company and do rehab for the injury, so to make things fun for the dancers I started making little videos along the tour and posting them to my Instagram account. That's what sparked it. Emily Nuttall, Northern Ballet's Head of Content, saw my Instagram feed and asked if I could run the Company TikTok. I began with a trial period and was officially contracted to run the account in June 2023.

What do you think the benefits are of using a less traditional social media platform such as TikTok for Northern Ballet?

It's hard to attract a younger audience to ballet but a lot of young people use TikTok, so by sharing ballet on this platform in our unique Northern Ballet way, we are finding ourselves new followers and audiences. Northern Ballet is one of few ballet companies using TikTok, so hopefully in doing so we can achieve recognition as a Company beyond the UK and access TikTok's broad international reach.

The number of users of TikTok increases every year. What do you think makes it so popular?

I think it's these trends that pop up and go viral. Everyone's trying them! I've never been on a platform before where one person does something and then millions of people replicate it. It's very new. There's that draw because it's short, quick and engaging. Usually, the trends are easy to follow so you can get out there and find an audience within 5 seconds. Also, something I've been trying to figure out is why certain videos from Northern Ballet begin to trend, but I haven't found a pattern to it yet. I started 'Ballet Step Friday', taking a step from the ballet vocabulary and asking a dancer to demonstrate it. No one is doing

that on TikTok in the ballet world, so it has really caught users' attention. I wasn't sure where to start so I tried something and stuck with it. I wanted to start my own trend!

Does TikTok give an insight into the dancers here at Northern?

I try to record all the Company dancers and give a glimpse into getting to know us. Even though it's on the screen of a phone, it gives a better idea of our personalities. TikTok is an easy way to connect to the individuals in the Company as otherwise it's only in special circumstances that our audience gets to meet us. I've been aiming for something more raw, more personable, more day-to-day. Really us dancers are just people doing the job they love! Showing the grittier side is really interesting; I want to find the 'normal' of ballet. You always see the end product in our profession and seeing what is in-between is fascinating.

How have you found running the TikTok account?

I like it! Trying to find the time to fit in my schedule is something I have to work hard to manage but I love it. I love being an artist as a dancer, but sometimes we're only creative in one setting. So, it's fun to take my creativity outside of the studio. I'm still using my skills but utilising them in a different channel. I get to take the job I love and extend it to a different sphere. I think that because I'm a dancer, the other dancers are easier with me. They don't freeze up when I'm filming because I'm already part of the creative process in the room. Sometimes I'll see something when I'm on the side, like a beautiful 30 seconds of a pas de deux and think that other people might enjoy that too.

**You can follow us on
TikTok @northernballet**



Northern Ballet so far:

Meet our newest Company members

We hear from two of our newest Company dancers about their experience of dancing with Northern Ballet so far. Meet Aaron Kok (Dancer) and Mayuko Iwanaga (Apprentice) who joined us in summer 2023.

What was it that attracted you to Northern Ballet?

Mayuko: First, Northern Ballet does a lot of performances all around the UK and, for me, travel was something I really wanted to do after graduating from school. Also, Northern Ballet's storytelling attracted me so much because I have always been interested in storytelling through movement, but had never really learnt to dance like this before, so I thought it would be a great opportunity to learn more about it.

Aaron: At the essence of what Northern Ballet does is storytelling, and that was what attracted me to the Company.

What has been the best moment for you since you've joined the Company, and why?

Mayuko: I think it would be my first performance of *The Nutcracker*, dancing the snowflakes on stage at Leeds Grand Theatre for the first time. The snowflakes piece is really demanding in terms of technique and stamina, and I found it hard to keep up with the other dancers. Even though I was very worried and nervous before I went on the stage, once we started dancing together as snowflakes, I totally forgot all my worries and really enjoyed dancing as if I was a snowflake, whirling around the stage. It truly was a magical moment for me.



Aaron: Every day is always a new day with something new to look forward to and always so much happening. It's hard to pinpoint a particular moment, but *The Nutcracker* runs were fun!

Mayuko, this is your first Company, but for you Aaron how does Northern Ballet differ from other companies you've danced with before?

Aaron: We tour a lot! It's definitely refreshing to take the ballets we perform to different cities and audiences.

Did you have a favourite city or venue on the autumn tour – and why?

Mayuko: I liked Norwich. There were a lot of pretty arcades and cafés with delicious pastries!

What are you dancing in *Romeo & Juliet*?

Mayuko: I will be very busy dancing in the corps as one of Juliet's friends and also as both a Montague and Capulet woman.

Aaron: I will be in the corps as one of the Montague men, alongside the role of Mercutio, which I'm very excited about.

How have you found the process?

Mayuko: I've been having so much fun learning Massimo Moricone's style as a choreographer. I've been learning so much about acting, expressing the "real" on the stage throughout this ballet. At the same time, I find it a little difficult to catch the details of the choreography and corrections and rehearse it with a lot of attention to what is happening around myself. This is definitely something that I don't really have experience with, and I am learning so much from other company members.

Aaron: I think *Romeo & Juliet* has a great history with the company and I'm excited to be a part of it. We had Sir Gregory Doran, the former Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford working with us in rehearsals for a few days and it was so insightful to hear the depth and meaning behind the text, which has helped with the artistry behind our movements.

Be sure to look out for Aaron and Mayuko on stage this spring!





Changing

In Conversation with
Emily Deller and Lyndsey Holmes

Places

Emily Deller and Lyndsey Holmes are longstanding members of the Northern Ballet team with a combined experience of 12 years with the company. In June of last year, they both transitioned to new roles, with Emily becoming the new Artistic Planning Manager and Lyndsey the new Company Manager. The pair joined us for a conversation about the change and how they've been finding their new positions.

Lyndsey: I started as Company Manager in June 2023. Before that, I've been Stage Manager, Duty Manager, and Assistant Stage Manager here. I began as Assistant Stage Manager in October 2016, so I've been with the company for over 7 years now, working my way up through the different roles in the team – and here I am!

Emily: I started as Company Manager in June 2019 and then started my new role as Artistic Planning Manager in June 2023. Pretty much exactly four years as Company Manager, almost to the week. It was really pleasing to me!

Lyndsey: Having done those other roles, it's nice how the understanding I gained from them has set me up for this new role. The job is quite different, really different in fact with it not being as linked to the stage. We're the same team and work out of the same office but the role itself involves much more admin and pastoral care of the dancers.

Can you both tell us more about what makes a successful Company Manager?

Emily: Communication!

Lyndsey: We're both very good at talking!

Emily: It is a key part of the job. It's a funny job because you're a department of one but work with every person in the building in some way. A ballet Company Manager job is a unique one, especially if you think about how few there are in the UK. The intricacies of ballet as an art form means we are required to have far more niche knowledge.

Lyndsey: I've worked previously in stage management for theatres, plays, and dramas but what differs here is that the dancers are also athletes. They've been training their whole lives, so it's closer to working with athletes than performers which requires a different approach.

Emily: There is a lot to wrap your head around. The dynamic of the group shifts and you have to shift along with it to make sure you're still giving the dancers what they need as they move through their careers. In that sense, you form strong relationships that have longevity.

Lyndsey: Both our jobs give us regular reasons to see people and interact with our colleagues. It's lovely to have the opportunity to go around the building and interact with people. We are lucky that we work in a building filled with good people who are all invested in the future of the company and the work we're doing. With everybody being so busy I think it's important to mingle and help each other get through.

Emily, can you explain what being Artistic Planning Manager involves?

Emily: I guess it's thinking in broad strokes, thinking about the tours. I liaise with venues about dates, link them to the relevant people here at Northern Ballet and make sure everyone understands where we're going and what we're doing. More on the artistic side, I look at what we're wanting to programme. I work closely with both Federico and David about our future plans and what our artistic options are.

Both of you have spent time away on tour with the company. What's in your 'tour survival guide'?

Lyndsey: Find great places for brunch. Good coffee and good food are how to survive the tour.

Emily: We've both toured so much and it can be easy to fall into being repetitive, so I'd say find a balance where you can. If you've got time to yourself, take yourself out for breakfast. Or we'll grab coffee with the girls in Wardrobe and Wigs. It's about finding the nice moments in what can be quite a hectic week.

You have both worked closely together for a while now, what's it like having each other to turn for support in your new roles?

Lyndsey: It is so useful! I'm constantly checking in with Emily for that bit of reassurance that I'm on the right track.

Having her there to ask questions is amazing. We've always worked well together even in our previous roles, but as a friend, having her still in the building is great.

Emily: There's so much crossover that I'm really trying to make cohesive. We know each other so well and we're such good friends, it really makes it easier. We share information a bit more readily.

Lyndsey: We're each a department of one but the crossover means we come together as a power-duo!

Emily: We've been sitting next to each other for the past four years. It's nice that we're both still here and we've both progressed. It makes coming to work special.

Upcoming events

Spring 2024

Romeo & Juliet London Opening Night Benefactors

Tuesday 28 May 2024, 7.30pm
(Drinks from 6.30pm)

London Sadler's Wells

Romeo & Juliet London Patrons Evening Patrons

Thursday 30 May 2024, 7.30pm
(Drinks from 6.30pm)

London Sadler's Wells

Beauty & the Beast Benefactors

Tuesday 4 June 2024, 7.30pm
(Drinks from 6.30pm)

Leeds Grand Theatre

Open Rehearsal Day Patrons and Benefactors

Thursday 22 August 2024, 10am – 6.30pm

Northern Ballet

Company class dates spring 2024

Northern Ballet Patrons and Benefactors can watch our dancers take their daily class on stage at theatres across our national tour.

Why not introduce a friend to the joy of dance? Patrons and Benefactors are also able to bring along a guest to any of our open Company Classes.

Nottingham Theatre Royal

Saturday 4 May 2024, 11.30am

Norwich Theatre Royal

Saturday 18 May 2024, 11.30am

Sadler's Wells, London

Saturday 1 June 2024, 11.30am

Leeds Grand Theatre

Saturday 8 June 2024, 11.30am

Book online now.


As a working ballet Company, all events and timings remain subject to change.





What's on

Tour dates

Romeo & Juliet

Nottingham Theatre Royal
30 Apr – 4 May 2024 


Norwich Theatre Royal
14 – 18 May 2024 

London Sadler's Wells
28 May – 1 Jun 2024 

Royal Shakespeare Theatre
19 – 28 Sep 2024 

Southampton Mayflower Theatre
3 – 5 Oct 2024 

Canterbury Marlowe Theatre
9 – 12 Oct 2024

Newcastle Theatre Royal
23 – 26 Oct 2024 


northernballet.com/romeo-and-juliet

Sketches

Leeds Stanley & Audrey Burton Theatre
9 – 10 May 2024

northernballet.com/sketches

Beauty & the Beast

Leeds Grand Theatre
4 – 9 Jun 2024 

northernballet.com/beauty

Three Short Ballets


Leeds Stanley & Audrey Burton Theatre
6 – 14 Sep 2024


northernballet.com/three-short-ballets


A Christmas Carol

Sheffield Lyceum Theatre
7 – 9 Nov 2024 

Hull New Theatre
12 – 16 Nov 2024 

Norwich Theatre Royal
19 – 23 Nov 2024 

Nottingham Theatre Royal
26 – 30 Nov 

Leeds Grand Theatre
17 Dec 2024 – 4 Jan 2025 

northernballet.com/a-christmas-carol

Tortoise & the Hare

Touring nationally spring 2024

northernballet.com/tortoise