

ROYAL ACADEMY OF
DANCE



RAD@Home

Online Community Engagement

*We inspire the world to dance
through excellence in teaching*



Who we are and what we do

The Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) has been teaching the world to dance for 100 years. We have a passionate commitment to excellence in all aspects of dance learning and teaching, historically in ballet, but today in a widening range of genres and styles.

We have a deep commitment to widening access to the enjoyment of dance in all its forms, and the ways in which it can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing. We deliver a range of initiatives, including: **Silver Swans**[®] for the over-55s, **Project B**, which engages male-identifying students in dance, and **RADiate**, for children with moderate to severe and complex special educational needs and disabilities.



RAD@Home

Photo: Suzanne Opitz - 2013 Members' Photo Competition

The opportunity – the power of dance

At present, we all understand what it feels like to be isolated. Now more than ever, the power of dance can lift spirits, offer physical benefits, mental stimulation and as a result, a holistic sense of wellbeing.

With the COVID-19 pandemic and the immediate needs of our communities, we have a plan to bring the benefits of dance to people digitally for at least the next 6 months. Under our new RAD@Home initiative, we are delivering a wide variety of content to keep people active and connected, and have already launched an expanding series of online classes and exercises to promote health and wellbeing to our online community, targeting new and diverse demographics.

Find out more about [RAD@Home](#).



Photo: Andy Hooper
courtesy of Lucozade Sport

Silver Swans

Silver Swans has been developed for older learners to take part in ballet lessons. Whether as an experienced dancer, someone who has dabbled, or a complete novice, all older learners of any ability are welcome to take lessons.

During this period of social isolation, older people are more likely to suffer muscle loss and a decrease in cardiovascular fitness while confined to their homes. This could have a long-term impact if they stop moving – their bodies may experience diminished flexibility, balance and strength.

Osteoporosis, a condition which mainly affects older women, can be relieved by gentle weight-bearing exercise such as that offered by ballet. Ballet works on improving balance, weight placement and posture, and mobilising and strengthening the legs, all of which helps to prevent falls.

Silver Swans also helps to bring isolated older people together with a sense of support and community.

Silver Swans Online Sessions

The RAD will offer weekly online Silver Swans sessions to the over 55s (people from 50 right through to 90-year-olds currently participate). These offer a variety of exercises, all of which can be done in any room in the home, and will help with posture, mobility, and muscle strength as well as providing an opportunity to de-stress. These classes will be permanently available on the RAD website and social media, for those who have taken Silver Swans classes before, as well as those who have previously not had the confidence, money, or access to participate.

What makes it different?

The already qualified teachers delivering the sessions have undergone professional development workshops to provide them with the knowledge and skills in the teaching of ballet for older bodies, giving them the expertise to teach this age group safely. On completion of the workshop, teachers become Silver Swans Licensees, able to deliver classes in their own communities. The Silver Swans philosophy is to allow the love and joy of ballet to shine through and for 'any body' to be able to progress and improve.

Impact

- Physical benefits for posture, mobility, and muscle strength.
- Friendships – providing a sense of purpose and belonging. Silver Swans breaks down social barriers, recognising and celebrating learners as individuals, especially in times of isolation and social distancing.
- Mental health benefits – studies show that participants feel full of energy, can forget their worries by focusing on their bodies and the required movements, and feel more positive about life in general.

Find out more about [Silver Swans](#).

One Silver Swan, aged 70, under lockdown is only leaving the house once a week to take out rubbish. She said: *“without the online Silver Swans exercises and my Swan community I would be going insane.”*

RADiate

Many children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, including Autism Spectrum Disorder, Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties, and those on the Child Protection register find it difficult to engage in group activities. In the past, the RAD has provided subsidised 'RADiate' dance classes to this group to develop their personal strengths, boost their self-esteem, and to encourage relaxation and fun. Last year over 5,000 children in selected schools participated in the programme.

During the COVID-19 crisis, many of these families are coping with the suspension of schools and essential services. Additionally, these children often have difficulty adjusting to disruption of their routine and environment.



Photo: David Tett

RADiate Online Sessions

The RAD would like to develop a series of 15–20-minute films for children with a disability, their siblings and parents and carers. A dance artist will lead dance activities and songs with themes set around the movement content, such as 'In the Forest' or 'Under the Sea'. The films would be grouped around age or key stage, as well as the amount of parent and carer involvement. A short introduction to each dance class will give parents and carers tips on how to engage their children, along with an understanding of the aims and benefits, and any equipment needed.

What makes it different?

These films will be made by experienced RADiate tutors and assistants who receive regular Continuing Professional Development in order to support the diverse needs of the children and schools they work with. Tutors will also share ideas, music and activities with each other as well as learning Makaton, a language programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable children to communicate.

Impact

- Participants will develop and express their own creativity in accessible sessions that ensure sustained involvement.
- Families will flourish creatively in their own homes, leading to happier and fulfilled lives
- The sessions will engage children in activities which improve mental and physical wellbeing in:
 - speech, language and communication skills,
 - teamwork,
 - understanding of themselves and others, and
 - attention and focusing.
- By developing 'micro' cultural communities, we hope that the families will be inspired to take part in future dance projects both with the wider community and beyond RADiate.

"The sessions are accessible and show an understanding of the needs of the children... and they look forward to them."

Sarah Gavin, Teacher,
Smallwood Primary School

Find out more about [RADiate](#).

Bringing dance to new and diverse groups

We know that Black, Asian, and minority ethnic groups, and those in lower socio-economic groups are typically under-represented in the world of ballet. The RAD is committed to providing dance and learning opportunities for everyone, and has developed an exciting vision over the next five years to open up its new headquarters to the local community and beyond, and to offer a variety of programmes to reach new groups.

During this period of social isolation, when many more people are online, there is an opportunity to communicate and connect with a variety of new audiences.



Photo: Jevan Chowdhury

New collaborations

The RAD will offer a series of online collaborations with local diverse groups:

- **Ballet Soul** – Their work is concerned with athleticism and the potential of the human body, exploring the soul and the body's capacity for deep physicality. Its influence comes from integrating Africanist movement values with classical ballet and other traditional dance vocabularies. Contemporary styles are also merged with traditional African storytelling.

Ballet Soul aims to create work that is accessible to a wider audience, and is devoted to dance education, particularly with increasing the representation of diverse dancers. Using the RAD's reputation as an international dance leader to showcase emerging diverse dance talent, a webinar will be targeted at local sports groups who would not usually engage with dance.

- **Tavaziva** – Established in 2004 this company is led by Zimbabwean-born Bawren Tavaziva who has a unique style of choreographic synthesis of ballet, contemporary and African dance. The RAD will showcase Tavaziva through its website, and its director will collaborate with RAD's artistic director to create new content, introducing our existing audiences to a new dance form as well as giving it wider exposure to new ones.

Impact

- A different and diverse group of people from all communities will be able to access the power of dance in their homes during a time where they are seeking new activities.
- These organisations will have a platform to showcase their extraordinary work to a much wider audience.
- Following the relaxation of restrictions, pathways will be opened for continued in-person participation with these dance organisations.
- These collaborations will empower a new audience to be creative and open the door to understanding and appreciating new cultural experiences.

Your support

We have been developing several online initiatives in response to COVID-19 as part of our ongoing and deep commitment to serving the widest possible communities. In the current climate we need to both continue this work and build for the future.

A donation from you could help us with this. For example:

- Silver Swans – £50
- RADiate – £250
- Collaboration – £500

You can make a donation online at [justgiving.com/campaign/RADathome](https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/RADathome)

If you'd like to also explore other ways to donate, or discuss a possible gift, please be in contact with:

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Photos: F De Abreu - 2019 Members' Photo Competition;
back cover: S Miles - 2019 Members' Photo Competition;
front cover: David Tett



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