

## **“We’re so very proud!” Local Young Dancers Head to London for Prestigious National Festival**

### **For Immediate Release**

**Young dancers from BELFAST will take to the stage this July, representing Northern Ireland at the UK's largest youth dance festival**

Talented young performers from local dance group **BELFAST BOYS** are set to travel to London to showcase their skills at the **U.Dance National Festival** after being selected from thousands of applicants nationwide. The dancers will perform at the prestigious event run by One Dance UK, taking place **from 25-27 July** at the brand-new Sadler's Wells East in London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

This remarkable achievement means the young dancers will join hundreds of their peers from across the UK for an extraordinary weekend of performances, workshops and career development opportunities in the capital.

The festival is organised by One Dance UK, the national support organisation for dance across the UK. The U.Dance programme supports youth dance groups throughout the year, culminating in the prestigious National Festival where young dancers get the chance to perform on a professional London stage as well as learn from industry experts.

### **About BELFAST BOYS**

Noting that it was often difficult for boys to get involved in dance and other creative activities, as they are generally encouraged towards sports activities, by setting up Belfast Boys in 2017 we aim to positively discriminate towards them, spark their interest, and help them to see dance as a skilful, physically challenging and really enjoyable activity.

With funding from Arts Council of NI, the Belfast Boys have examined wellbeing and mental health through dance and movement. The group were struck by how common it is to experience melancholy, 'a feeling of pensive sadness, typically with no obvious cause'. Together in this piece they explore the narrative of how to help themselves and each other, in and out of this feeling.

Speaking about being selected for the festival, group leader/s **DEBORAH HAMILTON** says:

*“It's a fantastic opportunity to perform and tour our work while representing NI. We are very proud of what we do and this event gives us time to connect with dancers representing many different regions. We look forward to workshopping with others, learning new skills and exploring new styles. It helps young dancers like us expand our horizons in dance and network with others (especially other male dancers) across the UK and the island of Ireland. We get to share, celebrate, workshop and perform alongside dancers from different dance backgrounds and communities. U Dance is AWESOME and lots of CRAIC!! “*

### **A Platform for Young Talent**

The U.Dance National Festival offers young dancers an unparalleled opportunity to showcase their talent on a professional stage alongside other youth dance groups from across the UK. Participants will also engage in enriching workshops with leading dance companies and gain insights from inspiring speakers during career talks.

Head of Children and Young People's Dance at One Dance UK, **Laura Nicholson**, says:

*"We are absolutely thrilled to be bringing the U.Dance National Festival to Sadler's Wells East London this July as part of their YFX programming. Year on year we are completely blown away by the sheer energy, talent and creativity of all the young people involved and we can't wait to see what BELFAST BOYS brings to the stage!"*

One Dance UK works towards excellence, equity and growth across all areas of dance, with members spanning the entirety of the UK and the dance sector. Through their membership, groups gain access to dance-specific advice, opportunities, networking, training, and resources. The organisation promotes dance as a viable career pathway and works to advance the diversity of dance across the UK.

#### **Festival Schedule:**

- **Friday 25 July, 7:30 pm:** Opening showcase featuring National Youth Dance Companies of England, Scotland and Wales
- **Saturday 26 July, 7:30 pm:** U.Dance National Festival performances
- **Sunday, 27 July, 5:00 pm:** U.Dance National Festival performances

All performances take place at Sadler's Wells East, Stratford, London.

**-- ENDS --**

**For further information about the U.Dance National Festival, please contact:**

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**For information about YFX Youth Festival, please contact:**

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#### **Notes to Editors:**

#### **About One Dance UK**

One Dance UK is the national support organisation working tirelessly to ensure a brighter future for dance. We work towards excellence, equity and growth across all areas of dance, including access, education, dance science, dancer health and wellbeing, performance, production, and management.

Our members span the entirety of the UK and the sector, and through us, get access to the dance specific advice, opportunities, networking training, and resources that they need to succeed.

Further information: <https://www.onedanceuk.org/programmes/udance>

### **About Sadler's Wells East**

Set in Stratford's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, **Sadler's Wells East** houses a 550-seat mid-scale theatre, as well as facilities for the new Rose Choreographic School and the hip hop theatre training centre, Academy Breakin' Convention.

Sadler's Wells East joins the rich cultural heritage of Stratford, opening in London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park as part of the East Bank development alongside the BBC, UAL's London College of Fashion, UCL and the V&A. Sadler's Wells East will support artist development and training, and the creation of new work. It will build the infrastructure for dance and make it accessible to more people. Sadler's Wells East will house a flexible theatre presenting a wide variety of dance performances. Community will be at the heart of Sadler's Wells East with a large open foyer that can be used by everyone as a meeting or performance space. There will also be dance studios and world-class dance facilities for dancemakers to train, create and rehearse productions.

#### **Supporting artists**

Supporting artists is at the heart of our work. We have associate artists and companies, which nurture some of the most exciting talent working in dance today. We host the National Youth Dance Company, which draws together some of the brightest young dancers from across the country. Sadler's Wells Breakin' Convention runs professional development programmes to champion and develop the world's best hip hop artists, as well as producing, programming and touring groundbreaking hip hop performances.

#### **Learning and community links**

Around 30,000 people take part in our learning and engagement programmes every year. We support schools local to our theatres in Islington and Stratford, designing experiences for children and young people to watch, explore and critically engage with the arts. We also run Company of Elders, a resident performance company of dancers aged over 60 who rehearse with renowned artists to make new work for public performances locally, nationally and internationally.

Sadler's Wells is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.