

THE PETER DARRELL TRUST  
NEWS  
Autumn 2025



Peter dresses as a pirate!  
Photographer: Alan Crumlish

This year is really whizzing past, and it has been a really busy one for us so far - lots of exciting projects to tell you about.

First up, we are delighted to report developments in some of the UK's most celebrated vocational ballet schools:

Elmhurst Ballet School in Birmingham will be starting a cross-curricular project in November based on Peter Darrell's 1971 masterpiece *Othello*. Samara Downs, Principal Dancer with Birmingham Royal Ballet, will be teaching the ballet to year 13 students, using the original Benesh Notation. Alongside this, the students will study Shakespeare's tragedy to help them understand better Peter's unique approach in the creation of the ballet.

At London's Royal Ballet School, the Degree student will similarly be studying Peter's *Othello*. This fascinating project will see them comparing *Othello* with José Limon's 1949 classic, *The Moor's Pavane* - another extremely powerful one-act ballet.

From January London Studio Centre's final year ballet pathway students, Images Ballet Company, will be focusing on Act II of Peter's *Swan Lake* and will perform it as part of the Images Ballet Company Summer Tour in May-June 2026. Darrell famously reverted to Tchaikovsky's original score as it was performed used at the ballet's world premiere in Moscow on 20th February 1877. In Peter's ground-breaking version, he distills the essence of the original plot – deception, true love against profane – setting the drama in the mid-19th century in a society where youthful ideals challenged existing moral structures. As well as learning the choreography, the students will study the history of *Swan Lake*, enabling them to understand the importance of Peter's work in a wider context.

We look forward to bringing you more on these exciting projects as they develop.



It was lovely to get together with a few old friends in Glasgow on 18th October for a drink and reminisce about our Scottish Ballet days. It made us realise that we need to do it more often - watch this space for more dates int the future!

Photo by Morag McKerrell of a few of us left at the end of the afternoon.

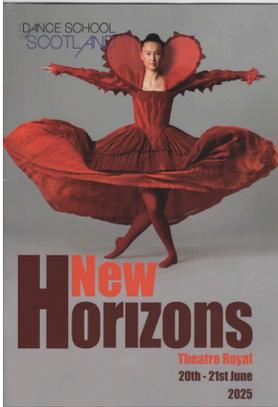


Photo: Rimbaud Patron

Celebrating more than 4 decades of **The Dance School of Scotland** reminds us of Peter Darrell's far-reaching influence on the development of dance in Scotland and his commitment to empowering talented young people from all backgrounds. The Dance School of Scotland became the first vocational dance school in Europe to be based in a state comprehensive school. Ann Baird, Former Director of Development and Planning at Scottish Ballet from 1983-1988, kindly shares this recollection with additional words from Yvonne Gray, Principal of Yvonne Gray Dance Studios.

Following on the success of the Music School at Douglas Academy which opened as a centre of excellence for music in 1979, it was decided that a similar scheme should be developed for dance. Peter Darrell was very much in favour of this and it was left to Robin Anderson (General Administrator of Scottish Ballet) and myself to progress the case. We visited secondary schools all over Glasgow to find a suitable venue. Knightswood Secondary was chosen and it was agreed that the dance students would share residential accommodation with the music students from Douglas Academy. The Dance School of Scotland was established in 1984 and took pupils from Glasgow and beyond offering specialist tuition in dance while safeguarding their general education. The school offers a vocational training for young dancers to a high standard in classical ballet thus giving a strong foundation of technique for all other dance disciplines.

The very first year's end of term performance was held in the school hall and received an enthusiastic reception from parents, friends and supporters. Fast forward now to June 2025 to the Theatre Royal where, with the enhancement of professional staging, lighting, sound etc the performers shone. It was a gala occasion and great credit must go to Artistic Director Kenn Burke for his leadership and inspiration.

"The programme offered a rich variety of repertoire, treasured pieces recreated for today's students from past productions, alongside fresh and imaginative choreography from emerging choreographers and teachers. The result was a performance that was joyous, moving and inspiring" - **Yvonne Gray**

It was truly a great occasion which the dancers will remember for the rest of their lives. Whether they go on to further training for a career in dance, teaching, therapy or other associated arts, they will take with them the discipline, confidence and work ethic they have learned at the Dance School of Scotland.

### Trevor Walker - Passed away 19th September 2025



Richard Honner reflects: "When I joined SB in 1986 I knew practically nothing about ballet having spent 20 years working in various opera companies. I fear that without Trevor's support and encouragement (and the same goes for Paul Tyers) I might have drowned in balletic ignorance but his knowledge of the rep and great experience of playing for class somehow helped me to survive. It was because of this baptism of fire and the thanks I felt for the assistance I received that we launched the Piano for Dance course in conjunction with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland to prepare pianists for the dance world, now entering its 20th year". Trevor will be sadly missed by all that knew him and the joy and humour he brought to our classes at Scottish Ballet.

### Trevor with Fiona Busby & Frankie Au on Scottish Ballet tour, Rottneest Island, Australia

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