

# THE PETER DARRELL TRUST

## NEWS

February 2026



Photo: Elaine McDonald as Léa in Chéri by Alan Crumlish

Welcome to our first Newsletter of 2026. We are looking forward to a really exciting year ahead.

Firstly, The Sugar Plum and Snow Queen prologue solos from Darrell's The Nutcracker will be performed by students from the Royal Conservatoire in Glasgow (RCS) at **Ballet Grand Prix** in Dundee on 15th February. You can buy tickets here: <https://buy.stripe.com/4gM8wQ8wT0v1d1MgjT2sM0n>

The final solo from Darrell's Five Rückert Songs will be performed by students at RCS as part of its **Ballet and Song** programme on 2nd March in Glasgow. This performance is sold out.

**Images Ballet Company** (the touring company from London Studio Centre) open its new programme on 7th May at the Arts Depot, Pentland Theatre in London and the programme includes Darrell's Swan Lake Act 2. We will let you know booking details for the tour when they are available.

Then on Wednesday 28th April the Léa and Chéri pas de deux from Darrell's Chéri will be performed as part of **Ballet Nights** at the Cadogan Hall in London. We are very excited that Birmingham Royal Ballet Principal Dancer Samara Downs and BRB artist Ixan Lorca Ferrer have agreed to perform this beautiful pas de deux. For more information and tickets: <https://www.balletnights.com/011>

Based closely on the novel, Chéri is set in Paris in 1910 and its theme is one of ageing and lost love. It tells the story of the final days of a long-running affair between Léa, a still beautiful but no longer young courtesan and her handsome but spoiled lover, Chéri, who is half her age. When Chéri marries Edmée, in a society wedding, the marriage proves to be a predictable failure, but when he attempts to return to Léa they both discover that you cannot recapture the past and that their intense romance, fed by Chéri's boyish charm and Léa's sophisticated beauty, has been dissolved by the passage of time. The pas de deux is from Scene 4, the Wedding scene - after the guests dance, the newly married couple depart. Left alone, Léa wonders about her future and suddenly Chéri returns for a private farewell.

The specially commissioned music for Chéri is by composer David Earl and at Ballet Nights extraordinary pianist Viktor Emanuel will be performing it live. This is a real opportunity to witness quintessential Darrell.

The Trust would like to thank Benesh International and the generous donors for supporting this project making it possible for this pas de deux to be performed publicly. Thanks also to Carlos Acosta, Director of Birmingham Royal Ballet for making it possible for Samara and Ixan to take part in Ballet Nights. We still have £1,500 to raise to cover the cost of costumes and teaching Cheri - It's not too late to donate if you would like to help us! Do get in contact at [peterdarrelltrust@gmail.com](mailto:peterdarrelltrust@gmail.com)



**Samara** trained at the Caroline Shaw and Pauline Kellett Dance Schools, and at the Royal Ballet School. She joined Birmingham Royal Ballet in 2003 and became a Principal in 2016. She has performed in Ballets by Frederick Ashton, George Balanchine, David Bintley, Ruth Brill, John Cranko, Mikhail Fokine, Oliver Hindle, Joe Layton, Kenneth MacMillan, Hans van Manen, Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer, Twyla Tharp, Ninette de Valois, and Peter Wright.

**Ixan** was born in Havana, Cuba and trained at the National Ballet School of Cuba. He was invited to the Assemblée Internationale 2023 at Canada's National Ballet School and in the same year reached the semi-finals at Youth Grand Prix México. He was awarded scholarships to The Royal Ballet School, Canada's National Ballet School and the School of Nashville Ballet. He was also in the top 12 in the finals of YAGP (2024) before joining Birmingham Royal Ballet in September 2024.

A big thank you Renton Thomson, who we indicated at the end of last year, is stepping down as the Independent Examiner of our Trust accounts. We will really miss him after so many years and thank him for all of his work for the Trust.



**Here is a little trip down memory lane from Renton:**

My first involvement in the arts after qualifying as a CA was Accountant with Scottish Opera, which I joined in 1968. We worked for two years in offices in Holland Street then moved to Elmbank Crescent which contained ample space for offices, rehearsal rooms and dance studios used by the new Scottish Theatre Ballet which Peter Darrell had created from Western Theatre Ballet in the South of England. With both companies working in the same building, there was a wonderful sense of the birth of the Arts in Scotland after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.

Artists from all over the world shared teas and coffees in the large assembly area on the first floor with singers, dancers and musicians. After work many resumed the conversations in the famous Griffin Bar.

The Ballet was hopeful that the two companies could merge and while the Scottish Opera Board were considering the matter, I was asked to take the Ballet Chairman to the Griffin for a whisky. The merger did not take place. In many ways I felt closer to the individual dancers and to Peter at that stage than I did when I joined the now "Scottish Ballet" as Finance Director.

After ten years in the industry, I had heard of the vacancy at Scottish Ballet and went to see Peter's Swan Lake at the Kings Theatre in Edinburgh. A little lady sitting next to me commented on the intensity of my involvement in the performance. So I told her my reason. During the next Act, she gently touched my arm and whispered "My grand daughter is one of the cygnets – she is the middle one". At the end she said "I think you should definitely be Finance Director.

I got the job! It took about two years to implement a modern finance system and then on Peter's death in 1987 a new era started for the company. Elaine MacDonald took over as Artistic Director, followed by Galina Samsova then Robert North.

In 1995, our Chairman and the Finance Chairman were summoned to a meeting to discuss a proposed merger of the orchestras of Scottish Opera and Scottish Ballet with a view to a later merger of the two companies. Now they wanted Scottish Ballet to become a small modern Dance Company not a National Company. I was told to clear my desk and save Scottish Ballet! A key moment was when Morag McKerrell suggested that I phone Anne Lorne Gillies a Scots singer who represented the arts in the new parliament. I said I would. "Well Renton, she is on the phone just now." "Nice one Morag." The eventual outcome was that the funding of the four National Companies was handed to a separate body to ensure their survival. Two years later, Ashley Page was appointed as Artistic Director and I reached retirement.

Angela Petrie, who was Chair of the Peter Darrell Trust, asked me to become the Independent Examiner of the Trust when The Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) was set up in 2006. It was great to be in touch with her again and hearing about all the people and stories I had loved so much. I have carried that work out for the Trust for the last 19 years!

### **The Peter Darrell Circle of Friends - why not join our Circle?**

For just £2.00 per month you will receive our Newsletters and updates on upcoming events and invites to special events and performances. We hope you might look at supporting us - it's not a great deal of money but it will make a difference to the Trust's work. You can do this by setting up a direct debit (contact us on: [peterdarrelltrust@gmail.com](mailto:peterdarrelltrust@gmail.com)

Or by donating directly through our Justgiving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/the-peterdarrelltrust>

**EMAIL AND DATA PROTECTION:** The Peter Darrell Trust will only use your email or address to contact you with information about the Trust and will not release your details to any third parties. If you don't want to receive our Newsletters and updates, please email and we will remove you from our database.

Administration: 33 Ulundi Road, Blackheath, London SE3 7UQ; Website: [www.peterdarrell.org](http://www.peterdarrell.org);

Email: [peterdarrelltrust@gmail.com](mailto:peterdarrelltrust@gmail.com)

The Peter Darrell Trust, A Scottish Charity No: SC023011