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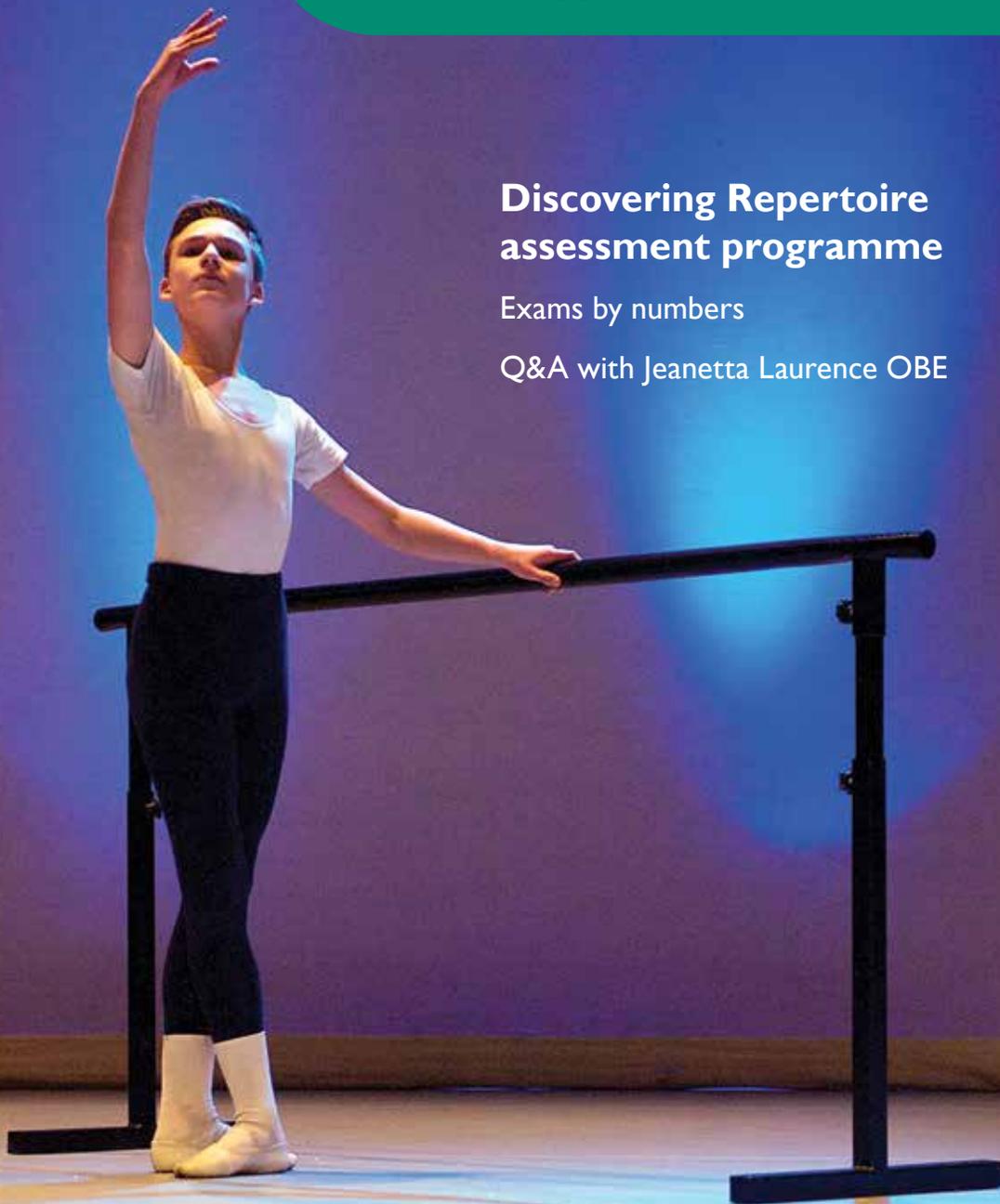
# FOCUS ON Exams

Issue 2 2017

## Discovering Repertoire assessment programme

Exams by numbers

Q&A with Jeanetta Laurence OBE



## Focus on Exams Issue 2 2017

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Welcome to *Focus on Exams*, the RAD publication dedicated to all things exams-related!

In this issue:

- our usual news and reminders
- an update on *Discovering Repertoire*
- a question and answer session with Jeanetta Laurence OBE, former Associate Director of The Royal Ballet. Jeanetta talks to us about her life in dance and some of the variations in *Discovering Repertoire*
- exams by numbers – a round-up of exam figures for your information...

If you have any questions about anything in this issue, contact us at [exams@rad.org.uk](mailto:exams@rad.org.uk)

Let us know about your exams experience via our online survey at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/examsfeedback](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/examsfeedback)

Thank you for your continued support.

**Dr Andrew McBirnie**  
Director of Examinations



Photo: Elliott Franks courtesy of The Royal Ballet

### Introduction

Discovering Repertoire is an **innovative new concept** in classical ballet performance. Suitable for students aged 12 to adult, three levels cater for those with some prior ballet experience (1–2 years of study, equivalent to Grade 2/3), to those of a more advanced standard (upper grades/vocational grades).

The programme focuses on **well-known classical repertoire**, meaning students will learn and dance choreography they have seen on stage, set to music they know and love.

The variations included are taken from ballets including *Coppélia* and *Giselle* (Level 2), *Paquita* and *The Sleeping Beauty* (Level 3), and *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake* (Level 4).

Students will have the option of taking regulated exams recognised at the following levels on the UK qualifications framework:

- Level 2 (equivalent to Grade 5/Intermediate Foundation standard)
- Level 3 (equivalent to Grades 6–8/Intermediate & Advanced Foundation standard)
- Level 4 (equivalent to Advanced 1 & 2 standard)

...continued overleaf

Photo: Elliott Franks courtesy of American Ballet Theatre



The choreography is tailored to the different levels, e.g. Level 2 will offer a modified variation, while Level 4 will offer the full variation.

### Flexible, modular learning and assessment

The programme is based on modular assessment, to enable students to learn at their own pace. Each level is made up of three units:

- Unit: Class – barre and centre
- Unit: Variation 1 – development exercises and Variation 1
- Unit: Variation 2 – development exercises and Variation 2

To promote a sense of achievement and progression, students will be awarded a certificate for completing each unit, while those successfully completing all three will achieve a qualification at the corresponding level.

The marking criteria include an emphasis on music and performance, maximising opportunities for all to succeed. Students can decide whether or not to dance en pointe, giving greater flexibility in how the work is approached and executed.



Photo: Elliott Franks courtesy of the Bolshoi Ballet

### What did the trials show?

There was a fantastic response from volunteers to trial the new work as it was being developed (over 300 responses from teachers worldwide). In total, 150 teachers from 28 countries have been involved, and the feedback has been constructive and overwhelmingly positive. 'Creative', 'challenging' and 'inspiring' were among the commonly held views. This feedback has led to much greater definition of the target audience and the levels at which the material is pitched.

### Who will Discovering Repertoire appeal to?

The social, health and wellbeing benefits of dance are well documented across all age groups. Along with increasing the accessibility of dance for all, the modular structure of Discovering Repertoire offers inclusivity and flexibility for a wide range of abilities and ages – but most importantly it will make real the aspiration of many to dance classic ballets such as *Giselle* and *Swan Lake*.

### An alternative for vocational and non-vocational students

Discovering Repertoire will give teachers multiple ways in which to grow or broaden their business. It will extend the interest of students who otherwise might stop dancing (once they realise that ballet is not going to be their vocation) by giving them a fun and creative alternative to the RAD's graded and vocational syllabi. For vocational students, the modular approach provides an opportunity to enhance and refine technical skills in the class module and gain strength if preparing the development exercises and variations en pointe.

### Challenging and engaging adults

Adults of all ages are coming back to ballet: for fitness, for social reasons, or because they have rediscovered their passion by seeing their children dance. Our research also shows that adults want to be challenged, to progress, and to feel a sense of achievement. Discovering Repertoire will deliver this satisfaction, enabling them to learn and dance the ballet repertoire that they know and love, and be assessed in smaller, more manageable, and less intimidating units of work.

The programme is expected to launch globally in early 2018. More information will be available in the June 2017 issue of *Dance Gazette*.

## RADius – the RAD’s new global IT system

We will soon be rolling out our new global system RADius. This is an interactive system that will allow teachers to register their students, enter candidates for exams, and receive their results – all through an online portal. Watch out for more news!

## Music for vocational graded exams

A reminder, that all vocational graded exams must be performed with a pianist, but the variations are performed to the orchestral tracks on the CD. The pianist must operate the CD player.

## Timings for Primary in Dance and Grade I

From January 2017, 5 additional minutes have been added to the timings of Primary in Dance and Grade I exams. The revised timings can be found on [www.rad.org.uk](http://www.rad.org.uk).

If you have not included the revised timings in your planning for upcoming exams, they can proceed as organised, but ensure that you include the additional time in future.



Photo: David Tett

## Minimum age reminder

From 1 January 2017, candidates must have reached the stated minimum age by a specified date before each exam session.

The actual dates are determined on a country-by-country basis; contact your local office for further details.

## Fiona Campbell Examinations Bursary

This year’s bursary will be open for applicants throughout September 2017. Teachers can apply on behalf of candidates, to the value of their next exam, by completing a simple online form. This should outline, in 150 words, why their candidate is deserving of a bursary.

Apart from the Solo Seal, all exams are eligible. Bursaries are available worldwide to exam candidates of RAD teachers. Successful candidates will have 12 months to use the bursary from the date of being informed of their award.

There are no published criteria and candidates will be chosen by the panel based on their subjective response to the applications, up to the total value of the fund in each application round.

## Important notice regarding payment of UK examination fees

The Royal Academy of Dance bank details have changed. Please update your records and online banking immediately with the following:

- Bank: HSBC
- Account: 90055948
- Sort: 401158
- Swift Code: HBUKGB4194P
- IBAN: GB48HBUK40115890055948

All other details remain unchanged.

If you have any queries regarding the above change please do not hesitate to contact your local office, or **Lauren Richards** (Financial Controller) on 020 7924 8908.

## Exams by numbers!





Luke Rittner, Paula Hunt and Jeanetta Laurence  
Photo: Harriet Grant

### Luke Rittner and Paula Hunt in conversation with Jeanetta Laurence

This year, at the examiners' seminar, a 'Question & Answer' session was arranged with Jeanetta Laurence OBE, former Associate Director of The Royal Ballet. Chief Executive Luke Rittner CBE, and Artistic Director Paula Hunt MNZM, interviewed Jeanetta about her life in dance – which included ballet lessons from some of the examiners present (June Christian and June Mitchell)!

Jeanetta also talked about ballet repertoire and some of the key characteristics of a selection of the variations to be included in the RAD's new *Discovering Repertoire* programme.

When recalling her training, it was fascinating to hear her reminisce about names and places famous in the ballet world – for example, going to school at the 'extraordinary' White Lodge in Richmond Park, surrounded by deer, and being taught by Dame Ninette de Valois, whose fearsome reputation was no idle boast – she taught with a stick, and used it occasionally!

**LR** Do you think that ballet training then was tougher than it is today?

**JL** No, I think it has evolved to embrace medical advice and repertoire needs but the requirements of good, thorough, basic training remain as paramount now as then. I was extremely fortunate to have June Christian as my first teacher; she put me through RAD exams and taught me until I went to White Lodge.

**LR** There is no shortage of boys at The Royal Ballet School now, but was that the case when you were training?

**JL** Fewer boys were interested back then. Since the film of *Billy Elliott*, there has been an increase in the popularity of dance in general, and the perception that male dancers are as fit, if not fitter than top class athletes; the boy/girl ratio is nearer 50/50 now!

**JL** [on touring with The Royal Ballet Touring Company] My first of many exciting tours, just weeks after I joined, was to Egypt. It was a wonderful company to be with, and changed a lot in the first few years. The Touring Company and the Company at Covent Garden amalgamated during my second year, and The Royal Ballet's New Group was formed. There were just six corps de ballet girls, of which I was one, and we carried on touring, showing many new works. In retrospect, this didn't work as such – audiences wanted the classics and so the company gradually expanded, becoming Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet and eventually relocating to Birmingham (by which time I'd retired) as Birmingham Royal Ballet.

**LR** Was it tough on tour?

**JL** Touring was tough but now things are harder. There was much less repertoire to learn back then! Now there is a vast repertoire at Covent Garden, embracing many different styles of dancing.

**LR** I was recently at the Royal Opera House watching a ballet triple bill – do you think that new work is more accepted now?

**JL** Yes, I think so. Great companies need the classics, but you have to be brave in planning new works and not expect every one to be a runaway success.

**LR** There is much spoken about the difficulty for dancers when they stop dancing and start a new career – how did you find this transition? Was it difficult psychologically?

**JL** Creating and working at Dance Directory (an agency particularly for classical dancers or those with classical training) taught me about the other side of the industry – the commercial world. It was exciting and challenging to start something from scratch and learn a new set of skills.

I didn't find my career transition difficult as I left the company prior to starting the agency, because I was expecting a baby. Nowadays it is easier to talk to dancers about the transition in their career; it is something which is thought and talked about much more openly.

After about five years at Dance Directory I realised that I didn't want to be an agent any more. I responded to an ad in *The Guardian* (Tuesdays were arts jobs!) and ended up working for Gillian Lynne (ballerina, dancer and choreographer) – I lost count of the number of *Cats* performances I saw in different countries! Working with Gillian was amazing – she has more energy in her little finger than most others have in their whole body. I worked with her for two years before returning to The Royal Ballet to become assistant to Anthony Dowell, then the company's director. There had been some changes to The Royal Ballet's administration and Monica Mason told me that they were looking for someone to work with him. Although I loved working with Gillian, I felt my heart was with The Royal Ballet so I moved back there to work and stayed for the next 25 years.

**LR** Your work involved planning repertoire – can you talk about this?

**JL** Repertoire is like an enormous treasure chest – and there are so many jewels within. The classics are obviously the cornerstone of any major ballet company. These must be rotated, but there are many other things to take into account when planning: the amount of rehearsal time allocated to any specific piece; the need to create a balance of the classical works with new repertoire; the music; the number and suitability of dancers for the roles in question; to mention just a few.

...continued overleaf

The repertoire is not planned as far in advance as opera, but there is usually a three or four year plan.

**LR** During the refurbishment of the opera house, the company had no home – how was this dealt with?

**JL** This was a very hard time; one of the darkest. The company was at financial crisis point and we were faced with having to reduce the corps de ballet. This would have been impossible – a company with only half a corps! Fortunately, several people, including Anthony Dowell, Anthony Russell Roberts (Administrative Director at the time) and John Sainsbury, then Chair of The Royal Ballet Governors, dug in their heels and fought for the company. Even though we kept the company together, it was still a difficult time; dancers had to perform repertoire in totally unsuitable venues. I still remember the Queen of the Willis slipping and falling several times at the Apollo Hammersmith – and having to store costumes in portacabins!

**LR** Are you enjoying retirement?

**JL** Yes, although it was a difficult decision. But The Royal Ballet is a family you never leave, and I'm still involved in various dance-related projects. I just have more time and energy to devote to family and other things.

Paula Hunt then spoke to Jeanetta about some of the repertoire choices for the Discovering Repertoire assessment programme. In general JL noted that having repertoire as part of an examination would give 'something [for candidates] to aspire to...'

**JL** [talking about the qualities required for the *Coppélia* variation] The Swanhilda character is feisty, vivacious and charming; it is a soubrette role. The three walks into the solo should really set the mood. The Spanish style involves much use of the arms, shoulders, and eyes. There is a liveliness – you've got to love her!

**PH** Yes, you could see that the students that trialed the work really enjoyed dancing this variation – the character really added to their performance.

**JL** [talking about the Odette, *Swan Lake* variation] This solo is all about control, about the breath and about expansive movement – the idea of the swan's wing, the breadth of the wing... She's got to fly... It is difficult to sustain. Using the music and not getting behind it helps – the dancer really has to be bold and go for each position, using the plié. The eye line is crucial.

**JL** [talking about *The Nutcracker*, Sugar Plum Fairy variation] That's tough! Dancers shouldn't be inhibited by technique, but again, it's all about the quality of the movement; weightless, charming, crystalline – almost other-worldly – in that she barely seems to touch the floor. Aim for great precision with the arms and feet. All those things are to strive for and it's wonderful that [candidates] get a chance to try!

**Paula Hunt (Artistic Director) to JL** I am sure the examiners would love to hear about your RAD exam results!

**JL** I think I got honours for them all!

## Successful Solo Seal candidates

The Solo Seal is the highest level of examination offered by the RAD. Candidates perform three solo variations, requiring a high degree of technical and expressive artistry, in front of an audience. They must achieve a minimum of 8 marks (out of 10) in every examination component in order to pass. In a typical year, no more than 20–30 candidates around the world achieve this prestigious award.

Congratulations to the following:

### Australia

Scarlett Atkins (August 2016)  
Jana Baldovono (October 2016)  
Kristin Barwick (July 2016)  
Olivia Castagna (October 2016)  
Luke Dimattina (October 2016)  
Lily Folpp (October 2016)  
Holly Frick (October 2016)  
Brayden Gallucci (October 2016)  
Caitlin Halmarick (August 2016)  
Taylah Small (July 2016)  
Katelyn Starie (August 2016)

### Brazil

Heloisa Magalhães Fonseca (October 2016)

### Canada

Claire Wu (February 2017)

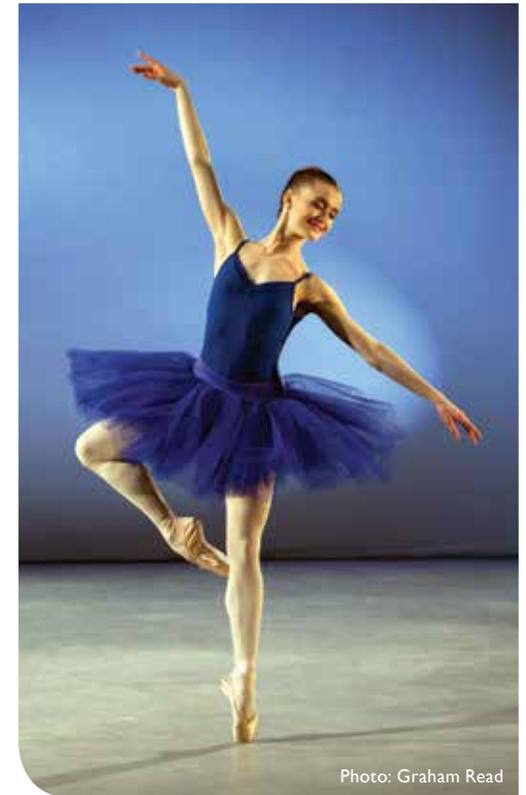


Photo: Graham Read

### Hong Kong

Lee Hoi Ying (December 2016)

### South Africa

Savannah Ireland (September 2016)

## Farewell

Sincere thanks and good wishes to the examiners who submitted their retirements or resignations in 2016/2017:

Linda Dixon (UK)  
Susan Dukes (UK)  
Andrew Mortimer (AU)

## In memoriam

It is with great sadness that we note the passing of UK examiner Audrey Wraight and South African examiner Denise Caro.

## Examinations department at RAD HQ

Since March 2017, the Examinations Business and Customer Services Administrator role has been undertaken by **Harriet Main** while **Katharine Christopher** is on maternity leave.

Examinations Officer (UK RAV Exams) **Cecilia Matteucci** and Examinations Operations and Communications Manager **Harriet Grant** will be on maternity leave from June and July 2017 respectively. **Kirsty Yeung** will re-join the Examinations Department as maternity cover for the Operations and Communications Manager role, and at the time of writing recruitment for the exams officer role is in progress.

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