



THE ROYAL BALLET SCHOOL

## PRESS RELEASE

### **The UK's favourite ballerina, Darcey Bussell CBE, goes back to School for a Royal Gala on 13 May 2009.**

#### ***London, 17 February***

Former Royal Ballet School student, Darcey Bussell CBE, is joined by a galaxy of ballet stars, artists, choreographers and some of the UK's foremost philanthropists at a Royal Gala at White Lodge, Richmond Park on 13 May 2009. The Royal Gala celebrates the completion of the four-year £22 million redevelopment of The Royal Ballet Lower School at White Lodge.

Made possible by the generosity of friends and supporters, the theme of the Royal Gala is taken from the philosophy of the School's founder Dame Ninette de Valois: *'Honour the past, herald the future and concentrate on the present'*.

The event includes performances, choreography and reminiscences drawing on the past, present and future of The Royal Ballet School. The School's past graduates, current students and future stars will contribute to this unique event. These include Sir Anthony Dowell, Dame Antoinette Sibley, Darcey Bussell CBE, Lauren Cuthbertson, Sergei Polunin and Ashley Page.

The evening culminates in a spectacular 'grand défilé', specially choreographed by former Royal Ballet School student Liam Scarlett. This historic grand finale will feature all the participants on the stage of the Margot Fonteyn Studio Theatre, White Lodge.

White Lodge will be specially decorated for the Gala by the unique artistry of the acclaimed Belgian floral sculptor, Daniel Ost, who is generously donating his services. Also, one of the most collected figurative sculptors alive today, American-born Richard MacDonald, will also contribute to the celebrations by installing a selection of his bronze sculptures, enhancing key areas of White Lodge. Featured amongst his works will be the Heroic bronze of Rudolf Nureyev.

Guests will also have the opportunity to visit the recently opened White Lodge Museum and Resource Centre – the first-ever permanent museum in the UK dedicated to ballet. The Museum reflects The Royal Ballet School's aspiration to develop its standing as a national focus and resource for dance.

The £22 million White Lodge Redevelopment Appeal was launched in 2005 in order to repair and restore White Lodge – a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Royal Hunting Lodge – to its former magnificence and to extend its life. From 1955, its constant and rigorous use as a ballet school had left it in urgent need of repair and upgrade to meet new statutory standards for Health and Safety and Child Protection. The new facilities enable the School to deliver a dynamic and harmonious fusion of academic and social education, with the achievement of excellence in dance as its primary focus.

£2.8 million is still to be raised by 2010 to meet the costs of the final few works on the buildings and gardens.

Director of The Royal Ballet School, Gailene Stock AM, comments:

*'This has been a magnificent achievement and we could not have done it without the endless hard work of our Chairman, David Norman, our Board of Governors, the far-sighted support of the Department of Children, Schools and Families, and the generosity of many other friends and supporters. Following closely on from the opening of the new Upper School in Covent Garden in 2002, the completion of the Redevelopment of White Lodge ushers in a new chapter in British ballet history. With renewed confidence, we can "herald the future" and build upon our reputation for giving to the world, not only supreme artists, but well-rounded and intelligent individuals – fine ambassadors for British ballet training'*

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