

PlayLab

Information Pack 2026/27

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01 Welcome

Sadler's Wells is a world-leading dance house, with a spirit of creative innovation and artistic collaboration at its heart. A key mission is to fuel the evolution of dance by providing artists with opportunities to experiment, explore, and develop their practice. In 2023, we launched our Artist Development Programme, consisting of six offerings, all open or recruited by open call, designed to support the artistic community through non-outcome driven initiatives. Following its first three years, we are re-opening applications for three of our programmes and continuing the rolling registration for two others. We have also developed new programmes that support developing choreographers to present work with us. You can read more about the full programme [here](#).

This **PlayLab** is a development programme for artists who are interested in developing dance performances for young audiences.

Led by internationally renowned choreographer **Takeshi Matsumoto** (Club Origami, Club Ninja) over a six-week programme, six artists will go on a journey of creative exploration, taking artistic risks and testing new ideas in a collaborative, supportive environment; working alongside a group of like-minded artists.

In order to take part in PlayLab you do not need to have experience in creating for young audiences before, but you do have to demonstrate your interest and passion for developing dance for young audiences.

02 The Offer

What is it?

The programme is structured as six weekly workshops culminating in a day of scratch performances at Sadlers Wells East where early-stage ideas will be shared with the public in a relaxed day festival setting on the Sadler's Wells East Dance Floor.

PlayLab is designed to support artists in creating work with young audiences. Across the weekly workshops, artists will explore methodologies, techniques, and theories that will influence their practical explorations. Coupled with rehearsal and peer feedback, the programme will support them in creating early ideas for a new piece of work to text with young audiences.

Each artist will receive:

- **A bursary of £1,400 GBP, broken down as £200 per day for seven days of work to cover the workshops and final performance.**
- **Budget for materials and to cover the costs of a DBS Enhanced check for working with children.**
- **Studio space at Sadler's Wells East for workshop and rehearsal days.**
- **Producing support from the Artist Development team.**

Who is it for?

We would like to support artists and creatives that:

- **Are interested in creating performances for young audiences.**
- **Have a practice rooted in dance in any form.**
- **Are at any stage in their career.**
- **Are over the age of 18 and not in formal education or training.**
- **Are residents of the United Kingdom and Crown Dependencies (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Isle of Man and Channel Islands).**

Unfortunately, we won't be able to support:

- **Individuals who are currently in formal education or training.**
- **Those who reside outside of the United Kingdom and Crown Dependencies (such as Republic of Ireland or other EU countries).**

If you are unsure if this programme is for you and would like to talk to someone, please contact our team. You'll find contact details at the end of this pack.

When is it?

This programme takes place on a Tuesday in a studio at Sadler's Wells East. Each workshop will follow the following schedule:

10:00 – 13:00: Morning session

13:00 – 14:00: Lunch break

14:00 – 17:00: Afternoon session

17:00 – 17:30: Reflections & Cool down

The confirmed dates for this programme are:

Tuesday 7 July: Day 1

Tuesday 14 July: Day 2

Tuesday 21 July: Day 3

Tuesday 28 July: Day 4

Tuesday 4 August: Day 5

Tuesday 11 August: Day 6

Tuesday 18 August: Rehearsal Day (half day)

Friday 21 August: Public Sharing (half day)

Please note that in order to take part in this programme **you must be available for all of the dates.**

03 Expression of Interest

To apply, please complete an [Expression of Interest Form](#) on our website.

In this form, we ask for some basic information about you, your creative practice, and your approach to making dance work for young audiences:

1. Please tell us about your creative practice.
2. Why do you want to take part in PlayLab?
3. How do you think your practice can inspire ideas for making dance works for young audiences?

You can submit your responses to the questions above in either of the following formats:

- Written statements each with a word count of up to 200 words
- Audio or video recordings each with a duration of 2-3 minutes

It's best that you prepare your responses before you click through to complete the form. Once you have prepared your responses, the form should take no more than 10-minutes to complete.

We are mindful of the unpaid labour undertaken for open calls and as such invite you to keep your response to the approximate length requested.

This open call launches on **Wednesday 15 April** and you have until **Sunday 10 May at midnight** to apply. You will receive an automatic response when your expression of interest has been received, if you don't receive an e-mail within 24 hours, please contact us via the details at the end of this pack.

04 Selection Process

This programme will be selected by:

- **Rob Jones, Associate Artistic Director at Sadler's Wells**
- **Valentina Vela, Senior Producer at Sadler's Wells**
- **Takeshi Matsumoto, Independent Artist**

Successful expressions of interest will present a clear vision for working with young audiences and will demonstrate the positive impact this development programme will have on one's practice.

We are committed to foregrounding under-represented voices and as such, we aim to offer at least four of the six sessions to:

- **Artists from systemically marginalised groups including, and not limited to, disabled artists, artists from the global majority and LGBTQIA+.**
- **Artists that identify as female or non-binary.**

The timeline for this initiative is as follows:

Wednesday 15 April

Open call launches for expressions of interest

Sunday 10 May

Deadline for expressions of interest (midnight)

Friday 19 June

Responses sent to all who submitted an expression of interest

We commit to responding to all who submit an expression of interest by the date above. Should for any reason there be a change to the timeline, we will write to update you.

We anticipate this will be a competitive programme and are regretful that we will receive many more expressions of interest than sessions we are able to offer. Unfortunately, we will not be able to offer feedback.

05 Access Requirements

We are committed to being open and inclusive and hope the process is accessible to all but realise that some may still encounter barriers in accessing this offer.

If this resonates with you, please get in touch by phone, text, or e-mail to let us know what additional support you require to make your expression of interest possible. Regrettably, we cannot give advice on your response itself as we will remain impartial in the process.

There is [a large-print, plain text version](#) of this pack. You can also [listen to an audio version](#) of this pack. There is a **read aloud function** available in the PDF, which is available to download [here](#).

Contact:

**Valentina Vela – Senior Producer,
Artist Development & Programming
E-Mail: Valentina.Vela@sadlerswells.com
Phone or Text: +44 (0) 7872 506 803**

Valentina is available from Monday to Friday between 10:00-17:00. Please allow two working days for a response.

We can offer additional financial support to help with anything you might need to overcome barriers that would usually make your participation in this kind of initiative prohibitive or challenging. These expenses could be (and are not limited to) your personal access costs, childcare or other caring responsibilities or local transportation for accessibility.

If you are successful, we will discuss these requirements with you and create a bespoke package of access support to suit your needs.

06 Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to have already made work for young audiences?

No. In order to take part in PlayLab you do not need to have experience in creating for young audiences before, but you do have to demonstrate your interest and passion for developing dance for young audiences.

What ages do you consider young for the purposes of this programme?

For this programme, we will be focusing on young audiences aged 2-5.

Do I have to attend all sessions?

Yes. It is a requirement of this programme that all participant artists attend all workshops, as well as the rehearsal and performance days. If you cannot attend one of the workshop days, you should not apply to this programme.

Do I need to have training in a specific choreographic style or practice?

No. We are open to a broad range of choreographic styles.

Can I apply if I am already working with Sadler's Wells?

Yes, this programme is open to everyone.

Is there access support to help me apply?

Yes, the materials are available in large-print plain text and audio. If you need further assistance with access, including our support with the understanding of terms used in this document, we can help. Please use the contact details at the end of this pack.

Are there age restrictions for this programme?

You must be aged 18 or over to apply. We acknowledge that everyone's journey is different, therefore there are no specific age specifications.

Can I apply if I live outside of the United Kingdom?

No, this offer is only available to artists with permanent residence in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Isle of Man and Channel Islands.

I am having trouble with the form; please can you help?

If you experience any IT issues in completing or submitting the expression of interest form, please contact us using the details at the end of this pack.

07 Contact

If there is other information that you need or questions you would like to ask, please get in touch with **Valentina Vela, Senior Producer** by e-mail at Valentina.Vela@sadlerswells.com. You can also call or text Valentina on **07872 506 803** from Monday to Friday between 10:00-17:00. Please allow two working days for a response.

Read more about the **Artist Development Programme** [here](#).