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# CHOREOGRAPHER-IN-TRAINING RESIDENCY PROGRAMME 2026-27

INFORMATION PACK



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# ABOUT THE TALENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Now in its fourth year, SPD's Talent Development Programme nurtures early-career Bharatanatyam dancers and choreographers, with a particular focus on ensemble work and choreographic innovation. The programme takes place over two residency weeks and offers a rich combination of mentorship, financial support, studio time, and professional development, enabling artists to refine their craft and build sustainable careers.

A first-of-its-kind initiative, the Talent Development Programme supports emerging choreographers in exploring ensemble work and developing thought-provoking, boundary-pushing creations. Building on SPD's legacy of groundbreaking ensemble productions including the Olivier-nominated *The Rite of Spring* – this year Seeta Patel Dance will mentor five early-career choreographers to delve deeply into movement, collaboration, and original ensemble work.

## **A note from the Artist Director – Seeta Patel:**

*"As a new National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England, we are thrilled to offer more meaningful and resourced support for Bharatanatyam dancer-choreographers. Having faced many challenges myself as a South-Asian artist trying to make work, I hope SPD can provide encouragement, guidance, and the space to experiment. In a shifting arts landscape, creating visibility for talented emerging artists requires both resources and a willingness to challenge existing structures."*



*I had an amazing experience with the talent development programme and would highly recommend it to any Bharatanatyam dancer. It gave me both the confidence and the tools to start pursuing dance on a professional level, and it truly opened doors for me, I even went on to win a commission the following year.*

*(Mentee 2024)*

# 01 | MENTORSHIP & COACHING

**Personalised Guidance:** Each participant receives one-on-one mentoring with Seeta Patel, tailored to their artistic ambitions and career goals. Between the two residency weeks and a workshop weekend, mentees will have three 1:1 mentorship sessions with Seeta and/or other members of the SPD professional artist network.

**Group Coaching:** Collaborative sessions foster a shared learning environment, encouraging mentees to exchange ideas and strengthen their choreographic skills. There will also be industry knowledge workshops where topics may include:

- Building a sustainable dance career
- Touring and working internationally
- Producing and project management
- Funding and applications
- Portfolio and CV development

**Life Coaching:** SPD partners with professional coaches to support the holistic development of artists, ensuring their well-being and career sustainability. Mentorship is framed as a long-term journey, complementing mentees' ongoing training and creative practice.

## 02 | CREATIVE TIME & CREATIVE RESOURCES

**Paid Creative Time:** Each mentee is granted two residential weeks plus one weekend of paid collaborative time, allowing them to experiment and develop their creative work without financial barriers.

**Collaborative Practice:** Participants serve as artistic resources for each other, cultivating an environment where peer feedback and experimentation are encouraged. Each day of the residency is led by a mentee, with tasks guided by Seeta to explore specific areas of choreographic practice.

## 03 | FINANCIAL & LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

**Paid Participation:** Mentees will be paid for Residency Weeks and the workshop weekend. SPD believes artists should be adequately compensated for their time, commitment, and artistic labour.

**Travel & Accommodation:** SPD covers travel, accommodation, and food expenses when mentees must work away from their home base, ensuring accessibility for artists from different regions.

**Evaluation & Documentation:** Professional video highlights of residency studio days are provided to support ongoing creative development.

## 04 | LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT & INDUSTRY EXPOSURE

**Sustained Mentorship:** Mentorship continues beyond the formal residency period, with points of interaction with Legacy Mentees from previous cohorts.

**Performance & Showcasing:** Mentees can share their work at informal showcases and celebration events. Feedback is constructive and developmental, with no public-facing requirement.

**Career Progression:** SPD actively seeks ways to integrate mentees into professional productions, collaborations, and commissions, supporting clear pathways into employment and artistic recognition.



*Photo credit: Kamal Macdonald*

## 05 | PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

<p><b>7-18 September</b></p>	<p><b>Welcome &amp; Onboarding</b> Plus one-on-one preparation sessions with Seeta Patel and Aishani Ghosh and a contracting session with the Executive Director.</p>
<p><b>21-26 September</b></p>	<p><b>Residency Week 1</b> Form-driven creative tasks led by mentees, with practical exploration of choreography, music, and storytelling.</p>
<p><b>28 September - 16 October</b></p>	<p><b>Mentorship Period</b> 1:1 sessions and industry knowledge workshops</p>
<p><b>10-11 October</b></p>	<p><b>Workshops weekend</b></p>
<p><b>19-24 October</b></p>	<p><b>Residency Week 2</b></p>
<p><b>14 November</b></p>	<p><b>Celebration / Sharing event</b></p>
<p><b>26 October - December</b></p>	<p><b>Evaluation and Closing</b> Remote session to reflect and wrap up.</p>

**Note: Dates are final; participation requires full commitment.**

## 06 | PROGRAMME STRUCTURE & METHODOLOGY

- **Five main mentee spaces** (one may be reserved for a Legacy Mentee from the 2023, 2024, or 2025 cohorts).
- **Four Observer spots** for promising applicants who did not get selected for the main cohort; unpaid, with costs covered for students/freelancers.
- Focus on Bharatanatyam ensemble work, technical skills, choreography, group work, music work, conceptualising, and storyboarding.
- Evenings include dance-based discussions, shared meals, and social interaction.
- Mentees leave with a tangible toolkit for their ongoing choreographic practice.

## 07 | WHO IS THE PROGRAMME FOR?

- Early-stage choreographers and dance practitioners of Bharatanatyam with 5+ years of stage experience.
- Artists seeking to explore movement creation within Bharatanatyam ensemble formats or develop a stage idea.
- Full-time artists or freelance professionals looking to enrich their artistic practice.
- Individuals able to commit to all programme dates.
- Participants in full-time education or employment; programme is unpaid (travel and accommodation covered).
- Over 18 years of age.
- Residents of the United Kingdom and Crown Dependencies (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Isle of Man, Channel Islands).

*Note: SPD cannot support artists outside these regions*

## 08 | APPLICATION

To apply, complete the [Expression of Interest form](#) here or on SPD's website. Applications open on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

### **In the form, we will ask you:**

- Introduction to your creative practice.
- Challenges faced in your career as a dancer-choreographer.
- Aspirations and what is missing from your current journey.

### **Selection**

Mentees are selected by Seeta Patel and the SPD team based on clarity of thought, enquiry, and articulation of programme goals.

SPD commits to diversity and inclusivity; one mentoring spot reserved for an artist from a systemically marginalised group (e.g., artists with disabilities, global majority, LGBTQIA+).

## 09 | ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

SPD is committed to openness, inclusion, and diversity. Contact the team if you encounter any issues with the form or have specific requirements. Larger-print and audio-descriptive versions are available online.

## 10 | CONTACT

**Email:** Vittoria Butti – [vittoria@seetapateldance.org](mailto:vittoria@seetapateldance.org)

**Info Sessions:** 19<sup>th</sup> May, 7pm – Instagram Live

28<sup>th</sup> May, 6:30pm – Zoom info session

## 11 | FAQs

**Programme scope:** Primarily for Bharatanatyam dancer-choreographers, though multi-style (must include Bharatanatyam) artists can apply.

**Public outcomes:** Residency is closed and safe; optional sharing permitted with credit.

**Age:** 18+

**Residency:** UK & Crown Dependencies only.

**Access queries:** Contact SPD for support.