STEP UP

OPEN CALL

2027



TRIAL BY MUFUTAU YUSUF SU26 © MAURICE GUNNING

Step Up Dance Project 2027 Open Call for Early-Career Dance Professionals

What is Step Up

Step Up Dance Project is a programme of professional development for recent dance graduates or equivalent early-career dance professionals that is presenting its **17th edition in 2027**. We are looking for **dancers who are Irish citizens or resident in Ireland who graduated in 2024 or since then** and who are interested in being part of a paid professional development programme. You're also eligible if your professional dancing career has started since 2024 but you have come through other training routes that didn't involve graduation. This is an opportunity for dancers in the early stages of their professional career. If you are only starting your career or graduating in 2027 you are not eligible. Previous Step Up participants who match the criteria above are eligible to apply again. We're recruiting up to five dancers - we welcome dancers from a diversity of backgrounds, experience and dance styles who are interested in developing their skill in this contemporary dance frame.

Step Up wants to connect recent graduates to the range of practices and practitioners that make up Ireland's dance ecology and to the international networks of dance in which we operate. **Curated by Director of Dance Limerick Mary Wycherley and delivered under the guidance of Rehearsal Director, Lucia Kickham**, the programme is focused on developing artists as performers while recognising the creativity necessary in the performer's work.

Dance artists rely on a range of skills including technical competence, improvisational facility, the ability to process input from a variety of creative stimuli, alongside a capacity to perform and engage with audiences and publics in different circumstances. We're hoping you'll come with some of those skills and with an appetite to develop them further.

COVER PHOTO - TRIAL BY MUFUTAU YUSUF SU26 © ADRIAN BUTLER



MOVING IN COLLABORATION INTENSIVE SU25 © MAURICE GUNNING

Creation and performance of new choreography

Step Up dancers will get the chance to develop new work and connect with Limerick and its communities. They will participate in a **performance production with choreographer Amir Sabra**, which will give them the opportunity to **perform in different locations nationally, including Limerick and Dublin**.

Amir Sabra is a dance maker whose work seeks to create spaces where different dance styles coexist within different bodies. Rooted in hip-hop and Palestinian dabke, his practice brings diverse movement languages into dialogue. Originally from Askar refugee camp near Nablus, Palestine, and currently based in Ireland, Amir has performed with companies and artists including Les Ballets C de la B, Pockemon Crew, Stereo48, Catherine Young Dance, and Junk Ensemble. His choreographic works include Hiphopgeez, Journey to Jerusalem, Within This Party, and What Did You Do Behind the Curtain?, which received the Prix de la Technique at Danse Élargie in Paris in 2022. In 2025, Amir co-created and choreographed Badke(remix) with Ata Khatab, a production by laGeste and Stereo48.

'I am very happy to be part of this creation experience and look forward to discovering together with the dancers how our different experiences coexist, finding space for one another in the same place and within our bodies.
Taking traditional Arabic music as our starting point, I want to explore with the dancers how our different dance backgrounds and movement languages can exist alongside one another, creating a shared space where we can celebrate unity within diversity.'

Repertoire, masterclasses and guest teachers

In 2027, we are pleased to offer valuable opportunities including both networking and performance engagements. These will foster connections and collaboration opportunities for the dancers as well as offer mentorship and coaching and a Studio Performance of the Step Up Production at Dance House, Dance Ireland.

The masterclasses and the guest teacher programme, **curated by Lucia Kickham**, provide the dancers with a range of physical practices. They will get a chance to hear from dance artists working in Ireland about how they sustain their practice as well as gain valuable insight into the repertoire of celebrated European dance works. The rep masterclass guests this year will be:



TRIAL BY MUFUTAU YUSUF © YANA BABKINA

Ryan O'Neill. Ryan trained at the Ulster University and Laban as part of Transitions. He has worked with Maiden Voyage, Off The Rails, ponydance, Tinderbox, Primecut, Oona Doherty Works (NI), IMDT, Junk Ensemble, Panpan, Philip Connaughton, CoisCeim, Liz Roche Company, Emma Martin/United Fall, Luke Murphy/Attic Projects, This is Pop Baby and Michael Keegan-Dolan/Teac Damsa (IE), Gwyn Emberton Dance (UK) and Punchdrunk's. Ryan is dance artist in residence with Luail.

Róisín Whelan is a Choreographer, Movement Director and Director based in Carlow, Ireland who works across Theatre, Opera and creating her own dance works.
Theatre Credits as Movement Director and Choreographer include The Borrowers, Circle Mirror Transformation, and Movement Rehearsal Director for Fun Home at the Gate Theatre. She has worked for Houston Grand Opera, Osterfestspiele Salzburg, Glyndebourne, Greek National Opera; Royal Opera House, a.o. Film and TV credits include Choreographer for AMC Productions' Moonhaven and Sanctuary; The Tourist (Season 2, BBC); and Life/Time.

Róisín will be creating a new piece for the National Youth Ballet of Great Britain for their 2026 season. Through the Dublin City Council Creative Hubs Award she will be making a new Dance Theatre work, 'The Great Melt', touring in Autumn 2026. Róisín studied a BPA and MA in Contemporary Dance at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance. Róisín has also been the recipient of multiple awards and residencies, and she is the Artistic Director of Róisín Whelan Dance.

Further professional development

Independent dance artists often have to make their own opportunities, manage their careers and build networks. The Personal Development aspect of the Step Up programme aims to give participants opportunities and a road map for taking the next steps in their career path. In 2027, we are pleased to offer valuable opportunities including both networking and performance engagements. These will feature a Studio Performance of the Step Up Production at Dance House, Dance Ireland. In addition, the Step Up dancers are given networking opportunities to foster connections and collaboration opportunities.

Career skills - workshops designed to support early-career dancers in the practicalities of making a career in dance. Topics will include Safe to Create Bystander Training, self-employment, contracts, application writing, CV development.

Coaching - each participant will receive sessions with a personal coach.



I'D LIKE TO GET TO KNOW YOU BY PHILIP CONNAUGHTON SU25 ©LUCA TRUFFARELL

Placement with Luail - Ireland's National Dance Company

Step Up dancers will once again have the opportunity to undertake a paid placement with Luail. Selected placements will take place during summer and autumn 2027, offering dancers the chance to gain deeper insight into the company's work and engage with its approaches to performance, choreography and creative practice. This opportunity is made possible through a partnership with Luail, Ireland's National Dance Company.

*Please note that dates and placement offer will be confirmed during the selection process and will be dependent on the company's production schedule.

Key dates

Friday 4 December 2026	**Application deadline**
Monday 14 December 2026	**Applicants notified**
Monday 11 January 2027	**Audition at DanceHouse, Dublin**
13 June – 10 July 2027	**Creation Block 1**
14–27 November 2027	**Creation Block 2**
Summer/autumn 2027*	**Placement programme**

*exact dates will be confirmed during the selection process based on the production schedule of the company.

Terms & conditions

Rehearsals will take place in Limerick 10 am – 6 pm Monday to Friday for the duration of the training period (Monday 14 June – Saturday 10 July 2027, both included and Monday 15 to Saturday 27 November 2027, both included). Some weekend and Bank Holiday dates may be required, but it will be scheduled in advance.

The five selected dancers will receive a **weekly fee of €650**, along with accommodation for the period of Sunday 13 June – Saturday 10 July 2027 and Sunday 14 to Saturday 27 November 2027 as well as the placement programme. Participants will be responsible for their own travel costs to and from Limerick, and for incidental travel while in Limerick. **Participants must be available on an exclusive basis and for both blocks of the production to take advantage of the full programme.**



OF THE PEOPLE BY CATHERINE YOUNG SU24 © MAURICE GUNNING

Application

Please send your CV and a personal statement outlining your motivation to be involved in Step Up along with a weblink to a 1-minute improvisation to stepupdanceproject@gmail.com with 'Step Up Application' in the subject line. Your personal statement can be written (100 words max.) or in video form (1 minute max. submitted as a weblink).

Applications should be submitted in one pdf, as an email attachment, to include cv, personal statement and weblink. Please note individual video files and documents linked to google drive cannot be accepted.

The closing date for receipt of applications is Friday 4 December 2027 at 12 pm IST.

Accessibility

The programme is committed to equality of opportunity, supports and encourages under-represented groups and values diversity. We guarantee an interview to any dancer with a disability whose application meets the minimum criteria for the opportunity. To be eligible for the guaranteed interview, you must have a disability or long-term health condition which puts you at a significant disadvantage in either obtaining or keeping jobs. The disability could be physical, sensory or mental and expected to last for at least 12 months. You do not have to be registered as a disabled person to apply under this scheme.

If you have additional access needs, please get in touch with us at stepupdanceproject@gmail.com

Step Up Dance Project is a partnership project between the Arts Council, Dance Limerick, the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick and Dance Ireland. Step Up's participation in the placement programme is possible thanks to a partnership with Luail - Ireland's National Dance Company