

## BBC Young Dancer

BBC Young Dancer is a dance competition open to dancers of all styles from all over the UK providing them an opportunity to showcase their dance skills. I first got to know about this competition in 2017 when I watched the south asian category final and the main finals on TV. I was so inspired by the dancers, I decided to apply in 2021. On the 25th of April 2022, I was awarded the title "BBC Young Dancer 2022".

I had to pass 3 rounds to get to the finals and I learnt so much during them. I got to meet so many wonderful people who had endless stories to tell. For example, some people were dancing and learning psychology or medicine at university at the same time whilst others had gone on week-long dance intensives abroad to work with famous choreographers just days before the casting calls. It felt like I had been transported into a different world where everything and anything was possible! Each round, however, brought challenges of their own, like speaking to cameras ( which I never got used to), performing my solo to a panel of judges and having to think creatively on the spot- which was something I enjoyed the most! By the penultimate round it felt like we were all just there to dance with each other and I forgot it was an audition!

After passing the 3 rounds, 10 dancers were invited to go to Dartington Manor in Devon for a week of intensive training and creative work with the choreographers. We had to create a group piece together, lead by Ivan Michael Blackstock , and learn our duets/trios. I was put in a trio with Hannah Joseph and Kai Scanlan and our choreographer was Seeta Patel. She is an insanely talented choreographer who I looked up to for such a long time, so to dance her work and her ideas felt like a dream. To add to the fun, we were set two challenges, one of which was to create a dance film where I was paired with Anna Daly. We created a fun, light hearted piece loosely inspired by The Office (the TV show) as we made the cameras capture intensely and awkwardly close head shots of our expressions. We won this challenge, however it felt more rewarding to watch everyone's films as each film was so different and authentic to the people that had created it, making them personal and meaningful to watch.

The second challenge was an improvisational performance to an audience. This was where they played random music tracks, which we had never heard before, which we had to dance to; displaying our musicality, our unique dance style and our spur of the moment creative thinking. Seeing everyone improvise was stunning because it felt like watching the truest, most unfiltered versions of themselves on the dance floor. I ended the day feeling so inspired and uplifted. Everyone supported each other so much throughout the residency and we felt like a family by the end of the week. We spent time with each other constantly, so to see the week come to an end was sad but we all knew that it was just the beginning!

After 6 months of waiting, we performed at the Roundhouse in London and it was surreal. Walking into the space and seeing where we were all going to perform was magical. The stage was massive and the ceiling looked unimaginably high. The room was lit a beautiful blue by all the beaming stage lights. I couldn't believe I was going to perform in that gorgeous venue with those amazing people! Through silent screams of joy and countless sweaty hugs, we made it to the end of the night where we performed our final group piece. Everyone gave it their best and we all just had fun on stage being who we wanted to be and showing what we wanted to show!

The bond, the connections and the beautiful memories I made with everyone in this journey are immeasurable. They have inspired and pushed me to be a better version of myself and I feel like I have a better understanding of who I am, what I stand for and how I like to dance. I am so grateful I

got to be part of this experience and that I got to meet and work with these amazing human beings!  
I look forward to creating more wonderful memories through dance.

Here is the link to the episodes : <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/b07gbzxt/bbc-young-dancer>

By Adhya Shastry