Press Release

For release on Sunday 8 June

Primary and Secondary Schools to Compete in Schools Dance Festival

Young dancers from across Trinidad and Tobago are set to take the stage at the Grand Finale of *SPARK* – The Schools Festival of Dance**,** bringing with them the kind of raw talent, creativity, and commitment that audiences don't often get to see at this level.

On Thursday June 12, the Southern Academy for the Performing Arts (SAPA) becomes a national stage where dance students will showcase months of preparation, originality, and cultural storytelling.

This year's *SPARK* finalists represent a wide spectrum of ages, styles, and interpretations, with choreography developed under the guidance of dance educators in both primary and secondary schools. Their pieces reflect technical growth and thoughtful engagement with themes aligned with the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) curriculum for Dance and Theatre Arts.

The event runs from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and is open to the public. Tickets are available for purchase on Island E-tickets and cost $40 for students in uniform**,** $60 for tertiary-level students out of uniform, and $100 for teachers and adults. They can also be purchased at the SAPA box office on the day of the event. The Grand Finale is suitable for families, educators, artists, and anyone eager to see the next generation of dancers make their mark.

Organised by the National Dance Association of Trinidad and Tobago (NDA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Secondary Schools Dance Educators Association of Trinidad and Tobago (SSDEATT), *SPARK* is a reimagining of the former Secondary Schools Dance Festival, which was first introduced in 2009. This year, for the first time, primary school dancers are officially part of the Festival, expanding the reach and potential of the platform to discover and nurture emerging talent from earlier stages of development.

The lead-up to the Grand Finale included two qualifying rounds, held onMarch 3 and 4 at SAPA, where secondary schools competed live and primary school participants submitted recorded performances. The entrants were judged by a panel of respected adjudicators: Emelda Lynch-Griffith (Head Judge), Sonja Dumas, Dr. Satnarine Balkaransingh, Aaron Charles, Jason Le Maitre, and Derreck Cassanova. Ten secondary schools and five primary schools have advanced to the final round.

Marisa Benain**,** founder of *Plié for the Arts* in Jamaica, will serve as special guest judge for the final round. Two dancers will be eligible for selection to travel to Jamaica for a workshop and attend the Gala performance of the final stop of the AMALGAMATION Tour with Alvin Ailey II on August 30**.** Benain's involvement is part of an ongoing collaboration with the NDA to strengthen dance education and performance opportunities across the region.

Benain will return in August with her company to lead an interactive seminar and workshop with Alvin Ailey II dancers on August 25, followed by two public performances on August 26.

The Grand Finale will also include guest performances and an official prize-giving ceremony, with awards presented to top-performing schools and individual dancers.

Boilerplate:

SPARK is an initiative of the National Dance Association of Trinidad and Tobago, a registered NGO committed to advancing dance education and performance development across the country. The Association invites support from individuals or organisations who believe in the power of the arts to shape young lives. Contributions help ensure that this national platform continues to evolve and serve the youth of Trinidad and Tobago.

To learn more about the Festival, visit ndatt.org/spark. General information about the Association is available at ndatt.org.

To contribute to the continued growth of the festival and support the work of the Association, donations may be made to:

National Dance Association of Trinidad & Tobago
First Citizens Bank – Maraval Road Branch
Chequing Account Number: 35000291270

[Design Note: Please display the following in a clearly boxed format below the release]

Secondary Schools Performing at the Grand Finale:

- Diego Martin Central Secondary School
- Holy Name Convent, Port of Spain
- Bishop Anstey High School East
- Moruga Secondary School
- Ste. Madeleine Secondary School
- Vishnu Boys Hindu College
- San Juan South Secondary
- St. Joseph Convent, St. Joseph
- Pleasantville Secondary
- Bishop's Centenary College

Primary Schools Participating:

- Arima Girls' R.C. School
- Cedar Grove Private School
- Santa Flora Government Primary School
- The Athenian Presecondary School
- Monkey Town Government Primary School