



ballet wooster

DANCE PROGRAM HANDBOOK

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND DANCERS

--- 2023-2024 ---

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A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Part of a dancer's training is learning and respecting classroom and performance guidelines, traditions, and etiquette. This handbook will help guide students and parents toward gaining the most from their dance experience with Ballet Wooster.

OUR MISSION

As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, Ballet Wooster's primary purpose is to provide students and community members with educational and performance opportunities in dance and the performing arts in a safe and encouraging environment. We strive to promote and inspire our community to be more involved in the arts through non-competitive dance education and quality performances that develop an appreciation of dance and the performing arts.

HISTORY

Established under a new name in May 2015, Ballet Wooster strives to maintain its heritage of outstanding ballet and dance instruction in the Wooster and surrounding communities. Our instructors bring to the classroom many years of professional experience as successful directors, teachers, performers, choreographers, mentors, and dance educators. Having established a successful ballet school in 1983, our dance program has grown by leaps and bounds. Since 1990, we have choreographed, staged, and produced 14 narrative ballets including 15 Nutcracker productions, as well as many contemporary and classical pieces. Each instructor is committed to providing her students with proper technical training and individual attention in a healthy and positive environment, as well as sharing the pure joy of dance!

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Our dance program is organized into five progressive categories that are based on a variety of factors, including age, ability, and commitment level: Pre Dance, Elementary Ballet, Intermediate/Advanced Classical Ballet, Ballet Wooster Company, and Recreational Dance. Our curriculum is designed to develop strong, expressive, and well-rounded dancers. The progression of levels has been carefully structured to ensure the safest, most thorough development of the dancer and each level is planned as a year-long progression (at a minimum) with different semester goals and monthly objectives.

CLASS PLACEMENT

Students are carefully evaluated and placed in the appropriate level by the instructors and class placement decisions are made in the best interest of the students. Generally, students remain in their assigned level for one full year. If a student shows exceptional progress, the instructor may invite her to a more advanced level. If a student is progressing at a slower pace, falls behind her class, or has poor attendance, she may be asked to remain at that level until additional progress is made.

Pre Dance (Ages 3 – 6 years):
Creative Movement, & Pre-Ballet Levels I & II

Elementary Ballet (Ages 6+ by placement):
Levels I, II, III, IV, & V

Intermediate/Advanced Classical Ballet (Ages 10+ by placement):
Intermediate I & II & Advanced I & II

*Ballet Wooster Company (Ages 10+ by placement):

Dancers at the Int/Adv level who commit to a minimum of three ninety-minute ballet classes per week are considered part of the Ballet Wooster Company, a pre-professional program for students ages 10+. These pre-professional students are committed to multiple classes per week, including ballet, pre-pointe, and pointe; guaranteed roles in performances; have opportunities for additional master classes, workshops, and intensives; and receive discounts at local dance stores. Classes missed are expected to be made up at a level of instruction or one level lower and within the current semester. Company students are also required to attend at least three weeks (M-Th) of Ballet Wooster summer intensives.

Recreational Dance (All Ages): Classes in a variety of dance genres designed for students of all ages and levels. Check the website for current offerings.

PUNCTUALITY

Please make every effort to arrive promptly for class. Please come already dressed and use the bathroom before arriving. The bathroom should only be used for emergency purposes. Students who arrive late to class miss the important warm-up segment and also disrupt the continuity of the class. At the discretion of the instructor, those who arrive more than 10 minutes late may be asked to sit and observe the class. Also, to control traffic flow, we cannot guarantee the door will stay unlocked once class has begun.

ATTENDANCE

Good attendance habits are essential for steady progress. Please make every effort to attend all classes and scheduled rehearsals. If you know in advance that a class or rehearsal must be missed, we ask that you please provide a note to the instructor at least two weeks in advance of the planned absence so the instructor can plan accordingly. In case of last minute illness, if possible, email us at: info@balletwooster.org. Students who are ill and/or contagious should always remain at home.

MAKE-UP CLASSES

If classes are canceled due to inclement weather, instructor illness or other unforeseen circumstance, every effort will be made to schedule a make-up class for a future date, usually at the end of the semester. You will be notified in advance of all make-up class dates and times in writing.

Intermediate & Advanced Ballet students should make-up all missed classes at the same level of instruction or one level lower and within the current semester

INJURY

If a student is injured during class, she should inform the instructor immediately. If a student comes to class with a previous injury and has pain and/or limited mobility, please tell the instructor before class begins. For safety reasons, it may be better for the student to observe class. In the event of a more serious injury, a doctor's note stating any and all limitations, course of treatment and/or rest period should be given to the instructor. Int/Adv Ballet students should continue to attend and observe classes and rehearsals during periods of injury. Observation will count toward attendance and much can be learned while observing – it remains an educational experience even when not physically dancing.

During rehearsals and/or performances, a dancer who is injured may be asked not to dance for safety reasons. The Ballet Wooster faculty reserves the right to make this decision.

PERSONAL CORRECTION

Personal corrections are necessary to develop correct ballet technique and are given in the form of constructive criticism along with equal parts of encouragement. It means your teacher sees potential and wants to help you improve. It is important to take corrections with a positive attitude. Try your best to make the change your teacher is looking for and remember to carry them with you to future classes. If you do not understand a correction that has been given, please ask your teacher for clarification.

DRESS CODE

The dress code is designed to encourage unity and discipline among students and is part of the tradition of all forms of dance training. Simple, neat attire with hair properly placed is expected for each class. Loose hair should be secured tightly to the head and dance skirts and/or leg warmers are not permitted. The appropriate attire and hair style not only help students to concentrate better, it also assists the instructor in evaluating the dancers' needs, allowing for more effective instruction. Please check balletwooster.org for details regarding your student's required dress code.

We ask that dancers wear an appropriate cover-up over dancewear to and from the studio. Dance shoes should NOT be worn outdoors at any time – this destroys the shoes and tracks dirt and debris into the studio. Please put the dancer's name inside all dance shoes and attire.

GOOD HYGIENE

Ballet is an intense physical activity which regularly causes dancers to sweat. We work in a close environment, therefore all dance clothing should be laundered after each class. Good hygiene is a must. Ballet slippers and pointe shoes should be allowed to dry thoroughly outside of dance bags – this also helps them last longer. Deodorant use and showering on class days are also recommended for older students. It is important to replace tights, leotards, and shoes if holes or stains develop or the student begins to outgrow them. (Gently used items in good condition can be donated to Ballet Wooster for other students' use.)

WHERE TO PURCHASE DANCE ITEMS

Stage Center
908 N. Main St
Akron, OH 44310
800-535-7810
www.stagecenterohio.com

The Dance-Wear House
5390 Fulton Dr. NW
Canton, OH 44718
330-497-9419
www.thedancewearhousecantoon.com

Footsteps Dancewear
24048 Lorain Rd.
North Olmsted, OH 44070
www.footstepsinc.com

Online:
Discount Dance
www.discountdance.com 440-779-0500
Dancewear Solutions
www.dancewearsolutions.com

WHAT TO WEAR

Pre-Dance

Dance with Me and Creative Movement

Children should wear comfortable clothing that allows a full range of movement. Bare feet with footless tights/leggings only. Hair should be pulled back securely and off the face in a ponytail or bun. Dresses, skirts, and jewelry are not permitted.

Pre-Ballet (I & II)

Girls: Plain black leotard (no embellishments or skirts), pink footed tights, pink ballet slippers with elastics sewn securely to shoes. Hair should be pulled back off face and tightly secured in a ponytail or ballet bun. No jewelry other than small stud earrings is permitted. Ballet skirts, leg warmers, warmups, and jewelry are distracting and dangerous to the dancers and are not permitted.
Boys: Black tights, plain white T-shirt, white socks, white ballet shoes with elastics sewn.

Elementary

Elementary Ballet (I, II, III, IV, V)

Girls: plain black leotard (no embellishments or skirts), theatrical pink footed tights, pink ballet shoes (canvas or leather) with elastics sewn and strings tucked in. Hair secured in a ballet bun with hairnet. No bangs, loose hair or ponytails, please. No jewelry other than small stud earrings is permitted. Ballet skirts, leg warmers, warmups, and jewelry are distracting and dangerous to the dancers and are not permitted.
Boys: black tights, dance belt, plain white T-shirt tucked in, white socks, white ballet shoes with elastics sewn.

Intermediate/Advanced & Pre-Professional Company

Girls: Plain black leotard with no embellishments (camisole preferred), theatrical pink footed tights (dancers on pointe should wear convertible tights with split soles), pink ballet slippers (canvas or leather) with elastics properly sewn. No ballet skirts or leg warmers are permitted. Hair should be secured tightly to the head in a ballet bun with a hairnet. No bangs, loose hair or ponytails, please. No jewelry other than small stud earrings is permitted.
Boys: Black tights, plain white T-shirt tucked in, white socks and white ballet shoes with elastics sewn securely.

For all other dress codes, please visit www.balletwooster.org/classes

POINTE SHOES

Pointe work (dancing on the tips of the toes) is a much anticipated extension of a dancer's training. There is a significant level of commitment and dedication before a student is considered for pointe work. The Ballet Wooster faculty takes a conservative approach in determining readiness for Pointe work with the long term safety and welfare of the student in mind. It is never too late to begin pointe work, but starting too early can cause problems later in life. Elementary V students are usually ready to start Pre-Pointe exercises. This class focuses on the technique, alignment, and strength necessary to support the weight of the body and move properly in pointe shoes.

Generally, after a year of Pre-Pointe and advancing to the Intermediate level attending 3 ninety- minute classes per week, the student is ready to be fitted for pointe shoes. This may vary with each student, but the typical age is usually 11½ - 12 years old, depending on readiness and with instructor approval.

There are many factors that determine readiness for pointe work including: attendance, consistent use of proper technique, overall strength, physical development and emotional maturity. The readiness for pointe work is determined solely by the ballet faculty. Additionally, the ballet faculty reserves the right to remove a student from pointe due to excessive absence, physical limitation or lack of motivation.

When students are ready for pointe shoes, the Ballet Wooster faculty member will give instructions as to where to purchase shoes which must be carefully fitted by a professional. We recommend Stage Center in Akron or Footsteps in North Olmsted, whose staff is experienced and knowledgeable in fitting pointe shoes properly. If you are planning to be fitted for pointe shoes (with instructor approval), please notify the retailer prior to your visit. They will make sure there is adequate staff on hand to assist you. Please also allow plenty of time for the fitting, take dance tights with you and make sure your nails are trimmed. Once shoes are fitted and purchased, do not wear or attempt to sew them. The student will then be taught how they should be sewn and tied during class.

Please note that once a student has begun pointe study it does not guarantee she will perform in pointe shoes right away. It takes time to build the additional strength and stamina needed to move safely and with ease while en pointe. The decision regarding when a student is ready to perform en pointe is made by her instructor.

PARENT OBSERVATION & PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

We ask that parents please not enter the studio while class is in progress. Activity in the doorway is distracting to students so we ask that all family members remain in cars or in the waiting room during classes.

We will be offering mid-semester parent observation observations. Parents are invited to attend a regular class to observe their child's progress. More information regarding parent observation is provided during the semester.

Fall 2023 Production of *The Nutcracker*

Ballet Wooster dancers will be performing "The Nutcracker" at OARDC the weekend of December 9th and 10th. Students 5 and up and enrolled in Pre Ballet 2 or higher

are invited to perform. All rehearsals will take part outside of class time for younger dancers. More information will be provided as it becomes available. There is a production fee for all performing participants. This helps cover costume and production expenses.

Winter-Spring 2024 Production

Ballet Wooster will be performing our annual story ballet in late spring of 2024. More information regarding a production for Spring 2024 will be provided as it becomes available. Pre-Ballet I-II, Elementary I-II-III-IV-V, Intermediate, and Advanced students will be invited to perform. You must be enrolled in the winter/spring semester to be eligible to participate in this performance. There is a production fee for all performing participants. This helps cover costume and production expenses.

PARENT CONFERENCES

The Ballet Wooster instructors are obligated to begin each class and rehearsal on time. In between classes a quick question or two is welcomed. If you have concerns or questions that require discussion, please contact us at info@balletwooster.org to make arrangements to speak with the instructor outside of the class. See below for more information regarding conflict resolution procedures.

STUDENT DROP OFF & PICK UP

Ballet Wooster is committed to starting all classes on time. **Because classes are scheduled continuously, your student's class may end up to 5 minutes early. Please be available for pick up.** Please make suitable and safe arrangements for dropping off and picking up your child. Ballet Wooster strives to provide a safe, educational environment for all students. However, our instructors cannot guard or supervise students before and after class. Please ask your child to wait inside the building until you arrive, park, and enter the building to pick up your child. The parking lot gets very busy, and students should not cross the parking lot alone. Again, it is not Ballet Wooster's responsibility to supervise or escort your child before and after class. If your child is young and may need to leave the studio during the class period to use the restroom, we recommend you remain in the building so we can contact you for assistance.

REFUND POLICY

In the rare case that a refund is requested, due to medical, emergency, or other reason, Ballet Wooster will grant the request in the form of a credit for future classes, prorated with a \$20 administration fee added. The credit will be held for one year. Production fees are non-refundable. Ballet Wooster reserves the right to review refund requests on an individual basis.

HOLIDAYS & INCLEMENT WEATHER

Ballet Wooster is closed for major holidays. Please refer to the website for scheduled closings. In the event of severe or inclement weather, classes may be canceled. This decision will be made independently of area school closings. Cancellations for afternoon classes will be made that day by 1:00pm. Cancellations for Saturday classes will be made that day by 8:00am.

As soon as a decision is made about canceling classes, you will be notified via text and email. Closing information will also be available through our website and on all of our social media channels.

In the event of class cancellation due to instructor illness or emergency, all attempts to reach you by phone or email will be made. All canceled classes due to inclement weather or instructor illness/emergency will be rescheduled at a later date, if possible. You will be notified in writing and in advance of all make-up classes.

PARENT/INSTRUCTOR RELATIONSHIPS

As with any relationship, communication is the key to relationship building and conflict resolution. The goal is to spell out all levels of communication so that board members, professional staff, parents, and dancers are aware of the steps they have available to resolve any questions or concerns they may have.

Communications parents and dancers should expect from the staff

1. Rules, guidelines and expectations
2. Notification of all class changes (cancellations/makeups)
3. Rehearsal dates/times/locations, casting, special events.
4. Concerns regarding poor attendance and lack of progress
5. Readiness for pointe work and instructions for fitting, purchase, sewing, etc. of pointe shoes.
6. The importance of regular attendance and focused participation at all scheduled classes and rehearsals.

Communications staff should expect from parents

1. Notification of conflicts with class and rehearsal, as far in advance as possible. Minimum 2 week notice for scheduled conflict with a scheduled rehearsal
2. Any injuries or limitations (physical or emotional) that might affect the student's ability to participate fully in class and in performances
3. Notification and reason for discontinuing classes at BW.

Appropriate concerns to discuss with staff

1. The emotional and physical well-being of your child (injuries/limitations).
2. Concerns about your child's behavior.
3. Clarifying questions about rehearsals and performance expectations and schedules.

Inappropriate concerns to discuss with staff

1. Class placement and casting decisions
2. Costume choices
3. Choreography decisions
4. Other students' progress, class placement, casting, etc

Escalation of concerns/conflict from dancers or parents

Please do not attempt to confront the staff before or after a rehearsal or performance. Research indicates that meetings at these times very rarely promote resolution.

Dancers or parents may share any concerns they have with their instructor. The instructor should share the conversation with the Artistic Director. If the issue is not resolved, a parent/guardian may schedule a time with the instructor and the Artistic Director to share the situation/their concerns. If the issue continues to remain unresolved, the dancer's parent/guardian should share the concern with the Board President.

Role of the board in dealing with conflict resolution.

Contacting the Ballet Wooster board should only be the FINAL step in resolving issues involving parent concerns, discipline, etc., after all other steps have been taken. Any communication with the board in regards to conflict resolution should be brought to the attention of the Board President. Please email info@balletwooster.org for current contact information for the Board of Directors.

Protocol for faculty in dealing with inappropriate behavior in class

Classical ballet is a highly structured art form that requires respect and discipline for the instructors and fellow dancers. It has been Ballet Wooster's mission to provide an atmosphere where kindness and respect prevail and where dancers feel welcome as they work together to learn and grow.

When inappropriate behavior is first noticed, the instructor will tell the dancer what they saw and remind the dancer how important it is to be exhibiting respectful behavior. This should be communicated to the Artistic Director. If behavior is noticed again, the instructor will ask the dancer to sit down until the behavior has been resolved, or for the remainder of the class. The situation should be promptly reported to the Artistic Director who will communicate the situation to the dancer's parent/guardian. If behavior continues, the dancer may be asked to sit out the rest of the semester. The board will consider whether a partial refund will be given.

PAYMENT

All tuition fees and performance fees must be paid before the first class of the season. If tuition is not received before the first day of class, the dancer's spot may be forfeited. Payment plans may be available at the discretion of the Artistic Director and Board of Directors. Students with unpaid balances will not be able to register for classes until all previous semesters have been paid in full. In addition, any student with an outstanding balance will not be invited to perform in annual or biannual studio productions. A community role may be offered, if available. Communications regarding unpaid balances will come from the Board of Directors.

DANCER AND STUDIO ETIQUETTE

Please observe the following etiquette at Ballet Wooster:

- **All classes may end 5 minutes early.** Be available for pickup.
- Be on time for class and rehearsal. Arrive early to change.
- **Bathroom needs should be taken care of before class.**
- If tardy, wait for the Instructor's invitation to enter the classroom. Ask permission before leaving the classroom.
- Follow the dress code for all classes.
- The main doors will be locked during class time. **Please ring the doorbell if you arrive and the door is locked.**
- In case of emergency, all students, families, and faculty should exit through the nearest door.
- If inclement weather occurs while classes are in progress, students may be taken to interior rooms until the weather clears. Parents should pick up students when it is safe to do so.
- Inform the Instructor about problems or injuries before class begins.
- No gum or food in the studio. **Bring a water bottle with a secure lid and leave it in the waiting room.**
- No street shoes on dance floors.
- Do not hang on ballet barres and never touch the mirrors.
- Clothing should be worn over dancewear to and from the studio. **Do not wear dance shoes outdoors.**
- Turn off or silence cell phones.
- No talking during class or rehearsal. **Raise your hand if you have a question.**
- **Respect for the teacher, staff, and fellow students is expected at all times. Bullying, gossiping, foul language and all negative behaviors are not permitted.**
- It is a tradition at the end of class to thank the teacher by applauding.
- Leave valuables at home.
- Do not leave trash in the hallways and dressing room.
- Parents should not enter the studio while class is in progress. Please do not stand in the studio doorway.
- **Please wait quietly** in the waiting area before, during, and after classes. Dancers should be focused on preparing for class physically as well as mentally.
- **No running or horseplay in the waiting area or classrooms.**
- If an issue arises, please notify an instructor or Artistic Director immediately.



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