

DANCE

The mission of the Dance department is to create a climate of professionalism which encourages all students to expand their technical knowledge and creative abilities as dancers; to create an environment which supports effort, hard work and risk taking so that each student confidently uses their talents to reach their full and unique potential and to foster respect for the art form and for the diversity and passions of the individuals within it.

Rigorous daily technique classes are designed to develop versatile and knowledgeable dancers. Students study Ballet, Modern, Dance History, Dance Improvisation, Dance Composition, Jazz, Repertory (Ballet or Modern) and Dance Skills. Elective class offerings may include Repertory, Pointe and non-major classes.

Students follow the curriculum prescribed by the Dance Department. Class assignments are made by the department chair and are based on age and intellectual, physical and technical development. Spending one year in any level does not guarantee a move up to the next level the following year.

One Year: A student who attends one year will take: Ballet, Modern, Improvisation, Dance Topics, Jazz and an elective outside the department.

Two Years: A student who attends two years will take, in addition to the requirements of one year: Ballet, Modern, Dance Composition 1, Dance Skills and an elective outside of, or within the department.

Three Years: A student who attends three years will take, in addition to the requirements of two years: increasingly advanced levels of Ballet and Modern, and Dance Composition 2, Dance History and an elective outside of, or within the department.

Four Years: A student who attends four years will take, in addition to the requirements of three years: increasingly advanced levels of Ballet and Modern, Ballet Repertory and/or Modern Repertory and Senior Composition/Production.

DANCE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Ballet Technique

BALLET - Levels 1 and 2

Ballet classes incorporate the basic elements of classical ballet, using techniques standardized by Agrippina Vaganova. The class work focuses on body alignment, basic body positions, general strength and simple coordination of all parts of the body. Each student is expected to learn the French name for each basic movement, the translation of that name, and be able to explain how to execute the movement.

The class begins with exercises holding onto the barre, continues with center work, and progresses to basic exercises that travel across the floor. All exercises are done on both right and left sides. Every class ends with a reverence, as a gesture of respect to the teacher and accompanist. The same exercises are repeated each day during the week, with minor changes to increase the difficulty of the exercise, or the stamina required.

BALLET - Level 3

This class builds upon the course work of Levels 1 and 2, using techniques standardized by Agrippina Vaganova. Class work will focus on increasingly complex elements, with an emphasis on supporting side strength, proper transfer of weight and foot articulation. In addition, students will begin to use more arm movements in coordination with the leg movements. Theory is discussed; knowledge of new vocabulary is tested. Barre work begins to take less time, as left and right sides can be executed without stopping. There is more focus on grand allegro (exercises travelling across the floor), which requires increased coordination and fluidity.

BALLET - Level 4

This class continues to build in complexity, adding new and more challenging dance vocabulary from the Vaganova technique. Correlations are made between the barre and the center work. The basics of alignment, turnout and articulation continue to be a focus. Flexibility is also a focus, as students are required to use their extensions in adagio work. Strength is tested by taking many exercises on to releve. Students begin to work on consecutive pirouettes and batterie in their petite allegro work. At this level, theory becomes more significant, and will be tested along with vocabulary. Connections to ballet history are explored.

BALLET - Level 5

Our most advanced level, Ballet 5 continues to expand the ballet technique from levels 1-4, using the Vaganova ballet syllabus. Exercises are longer using more complex movements, patterns, transitions and sustained work on. The exercises demand increased stamina and concentration. Artistry and musicality become a focus, as well as the details of the mastery. Students must learn more quickly and self correction should be automatic. Vocabulary and theory are assumed and tested. The students are also required to do some written assignments, research papers and book reports.

Modern Dance Techniques

MODERN CLASS – Level 1

This class will introduce students to the basic elements of modern dance. It will introduce correct alignment, vocabulary and movement common in all styles of modern dance technique. It will focus on strength, coordination, flexibility, use of breath, core support and use of space. The dancer will discover and support the body's center of weight and learn connections within the body. The class starts with a standing warm up then a series of floor work, center work and the across the floor material. As students demonstrate proficiency in these basic elements, they will be introduced to more complex exercises.

MODERN CLASS – Level 2

This class will introduce students to the basic elements of modern dance through the traditional modern technique and teachings of Rudolf von Laban and Irmgard Bartenieff. Students will learn Laban's Movement Framework – Body (what the body does), Space (where the body moves) and Effort (how the body performs the movement). Concepts of breath, core support, alignment, rotation, phrasing and spatial intent will also be taught using portions of the Bartenieff Fundamentals floor work. Through the class students have the opportunity to develop kinesthetic awareness, proper body alignment, physical strength, flexibility, endurance, and care of the body while exploring expressive movement through modern technique.

MODERN – Level 3

This course will introduce students to the basic concepts of the modern dance technique developed by Jose Limon. The exercises will be designed to train the dancer in the ideas of suspend and fall, use of weight, use of the back, ways to initiate movement, and musicality and dynamics. Technical elements learned in most classical forms of dance will be upheld in this class, such as turn out, stretching the feet and legs, and use of the plie. Occasionally important elements from other modern dance techniques will be introduced. Each class will follow the same structure which will gradually increase in level of difficulty. The class will begin in the center and then move to across the floor work, larger moving combinations, and finally jumping.

MODERN – Level 4

This class incorporates elements of the Martha Graham technique. Concentrated work will focus on strength, alignment, use of weight, space and time as well as continue to explore working off balance. The class work begins sitting, continues standing and finishes across the floor. Contraction, release of the torso, spiral of the back and shift of weight through space are the main elements of the Graham technique. There is technique-specific vocabulary including contraction, spiral and names of exercises. Students master the basic exercises then the degree of difficulty and refinement progresses throughout the course so that the same exercises are performed with substantial variation and sophistication by the end of the year.

MODERN – Level 5

Building on the coursework in previous levels of modern dance, this class will draw from a fusion of modern techniques. Students will focus on moving in a large and dynamic way, while also paying attention to detail and clarity. Students will have the opportunity to develop kinesthetic awareness, proper body alignment, use of breath, physical strength, flexibility, endurance, and care of the body while exploring expressive movement through modern technique as well as improvisational exercises. The class will allow the student to develop a greater fluency in dance technique, vocabulary and performance skills. Students will dig deeper into their investigation of musicality, dynamics, clarity, focus and articulation in time and space. Dancers will work to move in a more expansive way and investigate full body movement.

Creative Classes

DANCE IMPROVISATION

This is the first course in which students learn to find and following their own creative movement impulses. Trusting and guiding their instincts, and those of others, is encouraged. The skills of collaborating and ensemble building, while spontaneously creating, are critical to the focus of this course. The emphasis is on finding ways to inspire spontaneously improvised movement responses through the use of a variety of provided sources (such as music, props, poetry). Broadening students' range of movement choices, discovering and inventing original body movement, and eventually the skill of recalling those choices, discoveries, and inventions are the focus of this course.

DANCE COMPOSITION 1

This course introduces students to fundamental methods of creating and describing choreography. It will introduce key vocabulary and exercises that are prevalent in composition work including: space, body, shape, timing, dynamics, intent, compositional phrase elements and giving feedback. Students will work both

individually and collaboratively on various composition work that will increase in length and complexity as the year progresses. This work is performed and discussed. Students learn how to describe their work and that of others through the use of choreographic terminology and artistic criteria to support productive feedback.

DANCE COMPOSITION 2

This class builds upon beginning composition coursework. Defining, refining, and developing the elements, principles, and forms of choreography with increasing amounts of independent work are key to this class. Students work to craft space, time, shape, motion and energy through problem solving and exercises. Developing an idea independently, from initial inception to presentation to an audience, is the culminating focus of this course. The emphasis on probing questions and discussions during the presentation of student work provides ways for understanding and stimulating several creative solutions to the same assignment.

SENIOR DANCE COMPOSITION AND PRODUCTION

Senior Composition and Production will build on course work from previous levels of dance composition and improvisation. Students will apply the skills they have acquired to prepare for college/post-secondary programs and the development of solo material that can be used when auditioning for college dance programs. Solo compositions are then used as the starting point for the development of larger works. Each student embodies the role of director of their own work and as dancers in the work of one or more of their peers. The year will culminate in the creation and production of a senior concert featuring students' original choreography. Class time will be also be devoted to developing the skills necessary to bring the work to the stage.

Additional Coursework

_DANCE TOPICS

This semester course is designed as a unique opportunity to orient new dancers to the Academy dance department and to provide an understanding of the requirements of the program of studies. Many 'nuts and bolts' of the dance major's responsibilities are discussed, and guidance provided with accomplishing these. The course also includes an introductory study of the historical context of the techniques studied in the department, including ballet and modern dance, and their place in the field of concert dance. In addition, students will be introduced to the process and product of other the arts departments at the Academy.

JAZZ

Embracing and focusing on the African roots of jazz dance, this class will not only focus on the stylization and technique of jazz but also look at this uniquely Black American art form through the lens of social justice. Concentrated work focuses on key vocabulary and elements prevalent in jazz techniques including: improvisation, syncopated rhythms, social dance steps, isolations and more. The class will also focus on the history, influence, contributions and relationships jazz has with other art forms.

DANCE SKILLS

This course focuses on the skills that a student needs to incorporate into their life for a healthy and successful career in dance. These skills will help to make a complete and well informed dancer, who can navigate the ups and downs of the artistic world. Students explore four basic subject areas as they pertain to dance: health, pedagogy, audition skills and performance techniques. In an atmosphere of open discussion, we

explore ways to cope with the everyday stresses in a dancer's life. This course also provides students with skills to organize time and analyze their individual performance in dance technique.

DANCE HISTORY

This survey course introduces students to the roots and time periods of dance history. Ballet and modern dance, with respect to their connections to culture, world history, and influences on present day dance forms are emphasized (as they are within our curriculum). Within the study of western concert dance forms, we also explore the fact that this history is inspiring and yet fraught with practices that obstructed access and limited acknowledgement of dancers of color. Through a developed sense of community within the classroom, students honor their own narratives and those of the artists we study with the understanding that all dance is culturally informed.

Students examine various choreographers and dances focusing on innovative styles, themes, issues of the period and why they are important in dance history. This course provides students a way to understand, trace, and appreciate these similar or contrasting styles and approaches. Unifying their inquiry is a sense of students belonging to this history and family of dance.

POINTE

This one semester elective ballet class is comprised of pointe exercises at the barre and center work. The focus will be strengthening the feet and ankles. Once the students have demonstrated proficiency in basic exercises, simple ballet variation work will be added.

MODERN/CONTEMPORARY REPERTORY

This one semester elective class provides students with a structured rehearsal experience with choreography material designed for and by students that culminates in performance. Content includes artistic interpretation, style, musicality, and coaching relevant to the movement presented weekly and developed throughout the semester.

The class has a social justice focus teaching students how to use dance as a language that not only tells a story but opens up conversations about topics that are important to them and to our community. Students experience the creative process through research, education, text, open discussions and performance.

MODERN REPERTORY

This senior level class will be a year-long exercise in learning, retaining, and performing choreography using modern dance technique. This course is designed to increase the students' range as technicians, performers and artists by deepening the skills required to learn new material, to connect that material to the music, and to retain all of these details in order to perform the choreography in a confident and clear manner. Students will be encouraged and challenged to take risks with their performance skills.

BALLET REPERTORY

This senior class will be a year-long exercise in learning, retaining, and performing choreography using ballet technique. Students will learn to combine all elements of technical ability to create a vehicle of artistic communication by learning choreographic works which will be performed during the year. Some of the works will be existing ballets which will be reconstructed and modified for the ability of the students. Other works will be new pieces created specifically for the students in the class.

Dance Classes for Non-Dance Majors

MODERN FOR NON-MAJORS

This class will introduce students to the basic elements of modern dance. Students will focus on strength, coordination, flexibility, use of breath, core support and use of space. The dancer will discover and support the body's center of weight and learn connections within the body. Class will include standing warm up, floor work, center work and the across the floor material.

DANCE CONDITIONING FOR NON MAJORS

This class is a beginning level conditioning class which focuses on gaining strength and flexibility needed for dance technique. It will emphasize abdominal, back, leg and arm strength as well as increasing flexibility in the legs, back and hips. The class will be split into two parts; the first working on strength exercises and the second working on flexibility.