



First Steps to a Dance Career

Information for Parents

The Choice of School



Education: Classical Ballet

If your child wants to become a classical dancer, then s/he will eventually need to attend a professional ballet school. Such schools provide a complete dance education, as is demanded of professional dancers today. In Australia, children usually attend a good private ballet school until their mid or late teens before auditioning for a professional school. If the audition is successful, young dancers often leave their homes between 15 and 18 years of age in order to pursue a professional education in another city, or sometimes, overseas.

Professional ballet schools normally feed into an affiliated ballet company. Classical dance, repertoire, pas de deux, role studies, modern dance and character dance belong to the professional dance curriculum. Girls have separate classes for pointework. All pupils learn different choreography from the repertoire.

Lessons in functional anatomy and dance medicine, dance history, dance theory, art history and music theory all form part of a dancer's education.

There are ballet students who manage to complete their Year 12 studies with excellence as well as pursuing a successful dance education.

Education: Modern & Contemporary Dance

If your child is interested in Modern and Contemporary Dance, he or she has more time to decide on a dance career.

Of course the body should also be trained early enough, but as a contemporary dancer one can still decide at the age of 16 or 18 years to begin a professional education. This does not make contemporary dance less demanding, just different.

Just as ballet students must study modern dance, modern dance students must study classical ballet.

All dancers need to be healthy and fit. However the ideal classical form is less important in modern dance.

The educational institutions which concentrate on modern dance set the age limit substantially higher than ballet academies. In Australia, contemporary dance institutions are often structured within universities, thus requiring the dancer to complete a high school education and obtain a university entrance score.



Foundations

A Career

If the desire to dance professionally is more than just a phase, then many questions need to be asked: Is my child suited to this career? Is s/he meeting the requirements? Is all the effort worth it, for a relatively short career? What is a dancer's life really like?

The decision for a dance career is far-reaching and has significant results. Dance is a high-level elite sport. The education of a dancer requires perseverance and very high self-discipline. The way to the goal is long, the demands huge. An early separation from the parental home is often necessary because professional training centres are usually located in big cities or overseas. Already as a child and youngster long working days are the norm, particularly if one aims also to achieve a regular school education.

And, nevertheless, dancers love their job. They identify with the life as a dancer. And to many, dance is much more than an occupation. Dance is a passion!

Physical Conditions

In order to execute the technique of dancing cleanly, correctly, and in a healthy manner, dancers must have certain physical conditions. Some of these can be developed through intensive, solidly based early training. Others depend upon the genetic potential of the dancer which cannot be influenced. In this brochure we will deal with those areas which are essential for the most frequent styles of stage dance (classical ballet, modern, and jazz). For these, the primary concern is the movement apparatus. The ones, muscles, tendons and ligaments are what either restrict motion or make dance movements possible.

Physical Demands

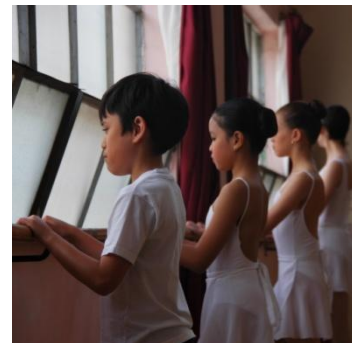


Professional dance education begins very early. Already at the age of approximately twelve years, the foundations need to be laid- at least for classical dance. At this age, more demands are put on your child.

Training frequency and intensity increases. These changes usually occur during the already quite difficult phase of puberty. The body does not make it easy for the young dancer: They grow very quickly, the sense of balance and mobility catch up later. The growth plates of the bone are especially susceptible to overload. Thus, less suitable bodies find it difficult to cope with the increased demands of training. Dance pedagogues and parents both need to pay attention to the balance the workload during this time. Otherwise, the enormous load and demands of dance training could lead to injuries.

Character Requirements

Professional dance places high demands on the character of your child. Discipline, self-motivation, goal orientation and stamina are essential for the education and the career of the dancer. All these characteristics prepare your child for the demands of later professional life – also outside of dance. If however children are forced too early, deficits in the normal childlike development can appear. Above all, dance should make your child happy. The necessary self-motivation cannot and should not be replaced by pressure from outside.



Dance styles

Stage dance consists of a multitude of very different dance styles. Besides classical ballet, stage dance includes contemporary dance, jazz and tap. Increasingly, elements of Hip Hop and Street Dance are found on theatre stages. Dance education takes that into account: The training repertoire at professional dance schools is becoming increasingly diverse. This gives your child the possibility to explore a range of dance styles.

Classical ballet

The rules of classical dance include the typically turned-out position of the legs ('en dehors'), the emphasis of the vertical axis and a technique aimed at defying gravity. Classical ballet serves as a foundation for numerous dance styles. In many schools, the classical training thus forms an important part of the total education.

Modern & Contemporary Dance

Individual expression and a sense of movement "from the inside out" reflect modern & contemporary dance.

Elements from many different dance styles flow into the modern dance technique. Whether Release technology, Breakdance, contact improvisation or far eastern battle and meditation techniques: Contemporary dance is multifaceted. The bandwidth reaches from dance theater to acrobatic performance.

Jazz and Showdance

The often spectacular movement patterns with high flexibility, combined with acrobatic elements and difficult technical combinations stipulate the fascination of Jazz and Showdance.