

The Studio & Santa Cruz Ballet Theatre | partners in excellence serving Santa Cruz County for over 30 years
Diane Cypher, Artistic Director | Pamela Martin, Music Director | Sandy Nelson, Administrative Director

PARENT TUTORIAL: De-Mystifying the facts behind Classical Ballet Training Methods

If you are a new ballet parent, ballet training may seem like a mysterious practice. It is actually surprisingly simple. Think back before the internet, before instant-gratification became the norm. If you're not old enough to remember, imagine the world your parents grew up in. Ballet training is built on practice, knowledge and repetition. The dancer's brain is as much a part of the training as his/her/their body. Physical aptitude for ballet is a wonderful thing, but not everything. The dancer has to be able (and willing) to stand still, concentrate, grasp concepts, and have the mental and physical fortitude to practice the same steps (or parts of steps) over and over and over again. Even pliés are practiced every day by the most successful and proficient professionals.

Why? Why is so much repetition necessary? Can't you just learn something and call it Done? Nope. Not even close. At any good school, the basics are built upon as the dancer achieves more skill. Those basics are the foundation of more challenging steps and concepts. Good ballet technique is built upon a solid foundation of skills that are started in the first classes, no matter what the age of the student. Even a 4-year-old Pre-Ballet student is embarking on the journey to a sound classical ballet foundation. All of that practicing posture and positions, stretching, and coordination of locomotor movements set successful building blocks.

Students who move from one studio to another will find that no matter what the teaching methods are, the transition will be filled with a period of adjustment. Each school has its own path and there may be steps along the way that are in a different order. This doesn't mean one way is wrong and another is right. It just means that if you are new to The Studio and are working on technique you've already learned at a different school, don't think of it as "repeating," rather think of it as strengthening the oh-so-important basic technical foundation that you will build upon to become a successful dancer.



At The Studio, about one year is spent preparing for pointe work, when the class or student is ready. Typically pre-pointe starts in Level III. This last year, two dancers who trained mostly through Zoom (like everyone) completed their pre-pointe training and started pointe work this summer. The student needs to be physically strong, have mental fortitude, excellent alignment and bodily awareness, and a good work ethic to be ready for preparatory pointe. When the dancer or class is ready, pre-pointe classes will be added to the curriculum.

Studio students progressing through the syllabus, from Primary facing the barre in first position to advanced dancers en pointe. Left, former student Emerson Moose practices a grand plié in fifth position. As a dancer with the Royal Danish Ballet, Emerson continues to practice this same building block every day of his professional career in Company Class.



PARENT TUTORIAL: How to Help Your Dancer Succeed

Every dance student will thrive with these basic needs provided for them:

- Good nutrition
- Restful sleeping patterns
- Good academic study habits
- Emotional support from parents, family members and friends
- Structure in the every day schedule to help with organization
- A day of rest once a week without any taxing physical activity (walking the dog, playing backgammon, helping around the house are okay)

Understand the following:

- Ballet training requires great mental and physical stamina
- Let your dancer vent now and then as they work through the challenges of their daily classes — this does not mean they are not doing a great job, or that they are not well-suited to the challenge or the activity in general
- Help your dancer deal with disappointment. As in daily life as an adult, you learn to adjust and make the most out of circumstances that might seem like they are standing in the way of your progress or of your own satisfaction. As children mature, they need help realizing that everything will not always go their way, but that it will be fine in the end. Learning this will help them build mental fortitude and will also help them be sensitive and understanding of their classmates who may be facing similar difficulties. Parents who use what might seem like setbacks as teaching tools for their child are parents who are raising a well-adjusted, sensitive, courageous and successful human being.
- Know that the artistic faculty and staff of The Studio and SCBT are there for your dancer. We support the growth of every student who applies him/her/their-self to this training. We encourage hard work, but also encourage each student to know themselves well enough to take a personal day if they need it. If you are falling behind in schoolwork, take the day off ballet to catch up. If you are just feeling exhausted and need a day to rest, take it. Each dancer is encouraged to learn what they need to succeed. Ballet training will not get easier anytime soon, so knowing your own personal limits is important. Self-preservation and self-care are good habits to build while a young person, as habits stay with us forever unless we take great pains to break them.
- Please call or email Sandy if you are going to miss class for any reason. Our attendance records include reasons for missing class, which greatly assists us to help our students succeed.

IMPORTANT DATES

Friday, July 30 ~ Early Fall Registration 10-1:00
Go to [Enrollment Page](#) for details and refer to your fall enrollment packet

August 6 ~ Last day of Summer Session

August 7 ~ Senior and Junior Company Auditions
Go to website [Auditions Page](#) for details

Week of August 9 ~ Company Rehearsals, includes Junior Company dancers
Go to website [Rehearsals Page](#)

Sunday, August 29 ~ Farm-to-Table Dinner

August 14-Sept 5 ~ Studio Closed, Company Off
Get adjusted to school and set good habits

Tuesday, Sept 6 ~ Studio Opens for Fall
SCBT weekly rehearsal schedule begins
Go to website [Class Schedule Page](#)

Friday, Sept 17 ~ Company Nutcracker auditions
During the evening SCBT rehearsal slot
Senior Company only

Saturday, Sept 18 ~ Children's Nutcracker auditions
Go to website [Auditions Page](#) for details
Junior Company attend the 2 pm audition

Saturday, Sept 25 ~ Nutcracker rehearsals begin
Go to website [Rehearsals Page](#)

Below: Peter and the Wolf Ballet Camp dancers enjoy acting out the different characters in the story. Special thanks to the Company dancers who assisted Miss Jenny, especially Ruby and alumna Caroline who helped with the camps all summer long!

