

Dance Dialogue... The ABA Newsletter

September 2011 – Happy Fall!!!

New Year!

Whereas I love summer, there is nothing like the exciting freshness that comes with the new school year. This fall we embark on our second year at our new location. It still feels new to me, but it also feels like it is where we belong! I know the dancers are really going to appreciate the AC we have upstairs with our 90 degree weather! Where was that all summer? As with every September, we have a lot of new faces around the studio. Thank you for choosing ABA! Please greet these newcomers with open arms. I hope that you all have a positive experience with your ballet and dance training.

This year we have added a new level to the curriculum. That means we now have a Ballet I-Ballet V. This will allow for a more gradual progression between the levels, and hopefully will be an improvement for the kids! I was able to attend American Ballet Theatre's Teacher Intensive over the summer. Hurray, I passed the test! So, we are not certified through level V of the ABT Curriculum. This is wonderful, as it is a more direct translation to the classes we offer at the studio. Whereas I always do my best for the kids, I also think it is important for even teachers to keep learning, being inspired, and staying on top of current theory and trends.

Classes are looking good this year. Amazingly, I still have a few spaces open in the Creative Movement levels. If anyone knows of a 3-4 year old that wants to dance please send them our way! Some of the classes are bigger than where I ideally want them to be. This always stresses me out in the fall! With September there are always a lot of transitions. I fully expect that class sizes will balance out over the course of the next few weeks as people realize a time doesn't work for them. I have been sending out emails or phone calls to some of the classes looking for people who might be able to switch to a different class. I appreciate your patience as we work through these

beginning weeks. I promise, it will work out.

Teachers

I am so excited for our teaching staff this year. We have 2 wonderful additions to the ABA family this year; Dana Bliss and Andee Fischer. As you see them around the studio, please give them a friendly hello!

Miss Dana comes to us with an extensive performance and teaching background. Her training included Conservatory of Dance in Mankato Minnesota, National Ballet in Toronto, Ontario, Southwest Ballet, and National Academy of Dance – many on scholarship. She performed with companies such as Minnesota Dance Theatre, Minnesota Ballet, Minnesota Opera Company, and Andahazy Ballet. Of course, being a good dancer does not translate into being a good teacher. Miss Dana also has a proven teaching record. She has taught at many different dance and ballet studios, both in Minnesota and in Oregon. She has had a large number of students train for professional careers. She does well in striking a fine balance between the discipline that ballet requires and the fun the kids so need to fall in love with the art. She will be teaching an array of classes in levels Ballet I-V. I promise, everyone will learn a lot, and absolutely love Miss Dana.

Miss Andee comes to us with a BFA in Dance from Western Oregon University. Miss Andee's love of dance and passion for kids is evident the moment she steps into the door. She is well versed in many forms of dance, including ballet, jazz tap, Scandinavian, African, and Hula. She has choreographed numerous original pieces. She has completed extensive studies in teaching dance to young children. Her knowledge and understanding of anatomy and physiology, and in particular how it applies to dance in young children, will ensure the safe training of your dancers. Miss Andee's energy and charisma are

contagious. She is so excited about the opportunities and challenges that teaching at a "ballet school" will bring. I promise, your kids will adore Miss Andee. She will be helping with the Creative Movement, Pre-Ballet and Jazz I classes.

Of course, for me having teachers is bittersweet. I love working with each and every one of your kids, even more than you know! But, the studio is too much for just one person to handle. I don't want to become burnt out, and turn into that cranky ballet teacher that I so remember seeing in my training. And, like I sometimes say to the kids, you will become twice as smart when you have 2 teachers! Well, that is if they are good teachers. As you know, I am picky in my hiring, so I do think that both Miss Dana and Miss Andee will be good for the studio and the students. Many of you will still have me this year; some of you lucky ones will have a couple of us this year. Those that aren't in my classes right now, know that I still consider my students! You may not be in my class this time around, but you will be again sometime, probably soon. In the mean time, work hard, and listen to your other teachers. And, know that you can always come in and give me a hug and say "hi" ☺.

Parking, Observation, etc

I do love having a parking lot. It isn't huge, but it is much better than street parking downtown! Parking spaces will fill up quickly, especially in the evening and Saturday times. Remember, there is also a lot of street parking in the area; don't be afraid to use it. Also, to encourage parking transitions I have designated 3 of the parking spaces at 10 minute drop-offs. As always, you should escort your child in and out of the building. But, if you want to run some errands while your child is in class that is perfectly fine! The studio is big and well set up for some observers, but it still isn't practical for all parents to wait inside the building during class time.

A lot of studios completely close the studios to parents. We have observation windows, which allow you to watch without being too much of a distraction for your kid. If it gets loud in the waiting areas the doors to the observation areas will be closed. Of course, that is what doors are for ☺. Know that being able to watch class is a privilege. For the youngest students it can be helpful for you to see what is going on, so you can help reinforce classroom expectations throughout the week. Older students tend to get more self-conscious. Please be aware and courteous to all students, not just your own. I would recommend bringing a book or activity to keep you busy, glancing in periodically, instead of watching as if class were a performance. And, regardless of if there are observation areas or not, parents waiting around while their kids are in their activities is breeding ground for gossiping. It is not acceptable to discuss the ability, placement, casting, etc of any of the dancers. The kids are sensitive, and will have ears for such conversations that are often times misunderstood out of context.

Other odds and ends: Most of you are aware of the payment box upstairs across from the studio. This is the easiest way to submit tuition. If you pay in cash please put it in an envelope with your child's name on it so I don't think I received a tip ☺. The girl's dressing room is upstairs. Boys! Please use the "family" restroom downstairs, down the hallway to the right, for your changing. Dads: if you bring your daughters to the class and they need restroom assistance this is also the best place for you to take them. As before, please do not throw partially eaten food items or half emptied drinks into the garbage can. They will attract ants and flies, and smell. This is the first issue of *Dance Dialogue*. I will have multiple copies placed around the studio for you to read while your child is in class. You can also access it on our website, www.americanballetacademy.net, where it is currently available as a PDF download. Please read it carefully, as this is typically how I communicate important information for classes, performances, etc. And, a word about

the website: I need a new one. My current one is not letting me consistently update (ex: I redid the calendar, and it switched back to last year's! Last winter I also deleted some pages, and then they mysteriously reappeared. Frustrating, as websites take a good amount of time. If you have lost your calendar passed out with registration forms please email me). It also doesn't allow me to copy/paste. I have been looking into it over the summer, but am always too busy. I hope to get something that will be even better in the near future.

Store

ABA has a store for your convenience. Honestly, I wish we had a local dance store where I could send you for your dance attire needs. Alas, I need you all to be able to get quality dance shoes! I know many of you would not be happy if I told you to drive up to Portland for little ballet shoes. We stock basics, including leotards, tights, and of course shoes. Shoes are the most important. Please, do not buy shoes at places like Wal-Mart and Target. The quality is insufficient for proper training, and they are sometimes dangerous. I typically have warm-ups for the when the weather gets a little cooler. You can expect products in the dance store to fit the ABA dress code. The store will be open Thursday 6-7, Saturday from 9:30-11, or by appointment. We hope you come in and check it out!

Dress Code

While on the topic of dance attire, here is a reminder of the dress code. Girls should wear a solid colored leotard, pink tights and pink shoes. If you have black shoes or tights from past performances these are also acceptable to wear. Please stay away from leotards with busy prints or bright colored tights. Both can be distracting and make it difficult for students to properly assess themselves in the mirror (a difficult skill to learn!). Short chiffon skirts are acceptable for Creative Movement, Pre-Ballet, and Ballet V. All skirts should be detached so that they can be removed if they become a distraction or need to try on costumes. Ballet III-V: fitted hot pants or knit ballet shorts of neutral and black colors are

OK, but it is not recommended you wear them at every class. When you go to auditions these will not be acceptable, and you need to be accustomed to dancing in your plain leotard. Gym shorts are not acceptable, and you will be asked to remove them. Ballet I and up: hair must be in a proper, secure bun. I recommend this be completed with first a ponytail, then hair pins and a hair net. Remember! It is very hard to learn to turn properly with hair flying in the face or falling out of a loose bun. Make this a priority as you prepare for class. Younger students: it is acceptable to wear a ponytail, but do try to get hair back and out of their face.

Nutcracker Notice

Just a quick reminder, though most of you hopefully got the dates off the registration form. This year our Nutcracker performance will be the 17th and 18th of December, continuing the tradition of having it the third weekend of the month, at the Elsinore Theatre. The performance is highly recommended, but not required. Please, if your child will not be able to participate let me know as soon as possible. *Unless I hear otherwise I will assume your student will be in the show*, and it is always a challenge to come to find last minute that someone is not available, requiring last minute, confusing changes. Once costumes are ordered you will be expected to pay for them if you have not notified me that you can not participate.

Too much info in this month's newsletter!
Arts in the Area will return next month!

For questions please...

Email:

americanballetacademy@yahoo.com

Visit:

www.americanballetacademy.net

See us on Facebook, and "like" ABA!

ABA Store Hours:

Thursday 6-7pm; Saturday 9:30-11am;
By Appointment with Annie