



En Avant

Monthly Newsletter for America's Ballet School

October 2011



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Happy October!

Dear Parents and Students,

Thank you for the great beginning to the new season! Each class is working hard and the faculty can already see the progress being made in technique and performance quality.

Ballet is an art that connects the body and mind. By instilling through class that learning ballet is more than just the physical aspects of the art, but has to have an active mind, each student grows and develops The elements of ballet – grace, posture, self-expression, discipline, commitment – transfer to their lives. This issue of *En Avant* will explore how the curriculum at America's Ballet School strives to solidify this body-mind connection. For our littlest dancers, this includes marrying text with the dance movements for the complete comprehension of each movement taught. Read more in the *Le Petite Salon de Danse* section of this issue. For the older dancers, this includes learning the importance of pantomime within classical ballet and focusing on the depth of character while learning variations and contemporary vocabulary.

By learning these connections, the dancers gain more than just the steps. If we start at a young age to master the artistry of the movement by connecting our minds to our bodies, the goal of becoming a professional dancer can be reached.

Thank you,

Paula Nunez

Artistic Director of America's Ballet School & DanzAmerica's Project, Inc.

Importance of Body and Mind Connections

Ballet is an art that connects the body and mind through movement. Each class, rehearsal, and performance is unique; though the steps may be the same, the experience is different each and every time.



To prepare for this in the performance, our curriculum strives to have the mind actively engaged throughout each class and rehearsal. By observing the students in class, the faculty is able to give feedback to each student, training the students to listen and apply all group corrections and individual comments made throughout each class. Through actively monitoring and analyzing their personal performance while applying personal feedback, the students are learning an important aspect of understanding and gaining ballet technique. By accepting responsibility for their individual performance, the more the student will gain. Learning to apply personal feedback by internalizing the words enhances:

- Body image
- Concentration
- Movement Confidence
- Self-Confidence
- Self-Esteem

By connecting the mind and body, the student is able to have the above as well as experiencing the joy of movement and self-expression. To be a dancer takes patience and hard work, but also it takes emotional commitment. At America's Ballet School, we strive to have the joy of ballet and self-expression instilled into our students in each and every class. This is achieved by bringing in other elements to the ballet class. These elements include text, songs, and stories in the youngest levels (see more in the *Le Petit Salon de Danse* section) and pantomime and characterizations in the older classes.

Learning the importance of pantomime within classical ballet and focusing on the depth of character while learning variations and contemporary vocabulary is emphasized beginning at eight years old. Pantomime in ballet allows for the dancers to say or convey to the audience vital information through gesture rather than through dancing. For example, marriage is conveyed through pointing to the left ring finger and dance is conveyed by raising your arms above your head and circling your hands around each other. Level 3B has been learning about this type of communication in ballet through learning a part of Swanilda's variation from *Coppelia*.

Each variation has a unique character that the dancer discovers through the learning and coaching process. Swanilda's character is inquisitive, spirited, and charming as well as being refined and showing strength and determination all while having fun. On the other hand, Kitri variations from *Don Quixote* shows a fiery side of the dancer, giving the dancer the opportunity to give each movement that Spanish passionate flair while portraying this naughty and high spirited heroine.

By accessing these emotional qualities while they are dancing, our students are able to connect with the character and give life to the dancing. Without the mental connection of bringing the character into the variation, the movements, no matter how perfectly executed, falls flat. We want our students to have this connection and work toward it in each class, rehearsal and performance as those dancers who have these connections between the body and mind are the ones that are sought after by professional companies.



References

Read more about pantomime in ballet in this article by Peter Brandenhoff for Dance Spirit - <http://www.dancespirit.com/articles/2589>

And if you need a gift idea –



Technical Manual and Dictionary of Classical Ballet by Gail Grant –
Dover Publications (1982) ISBN
0486218430

It's a great guide and an essential part of each dancer's library!

ABS Faculty Updates

If you haven't noticed, our own Jose Gamero is now on faculty. His excitement to share his knowledge of ballet spills over as he teaches the Level 1A, Intermediate 2, and Level 2A classes as well as private lessons. Jose is also honing his own technique by taking classes at the University of South Florida.

Also we are pleased to announce that Ms. Paula Nunez has been recognized as the Women of the Month by Tampa's Culture and Cuisine Club. Check out the article at <http://cultureandcuisineclub.com/?p=1288>



2011 Nutcracker Production

Rehearsals are now underway for the 2011 Nutcracker Production. We are excited to have almost all of America's Ballet School involved in the production. Please look for emails from danzamericaproject@gmail.com for updates to rehearsal schedules and volunteer information. If you have not received the rehearsal schedule for your dancer's roles, please email danzamericaproject@gmail.com to ensure that you are on the correct contact lists.

Here are the important Nutcracker Production dates for you to remember:

November 12, 2011	Tickets for the Productions go on Sale 1 st Full Production Rehearsal
November 15, 2011	All Program Advertisements and Season Sponsorships are Due
November 18, 2011	ABS Holiday Open House featuring Nutcracker excerpts.
November 19, 2011	Full Production Rehearsal
November 25, 2011	Outreach Event at the Hyde Park Enchanted Tree Lighting
November 28 – December 1, 2011	Tech Week for University of South Florida Production
December 3, 2011	7pm Public Performance at USF
December 9, 2011	11am School Performance for Pasco County Schools
December 10, 2011	7pm Public Performance at Center for the Arts Wesley Chapel



Updates on ABS Alumni

Kate Lynn Robichaux just performed in Orlando Ballet's performances Oct. 21, 22, and 23. Congratulations!

Rosie DeAngelo and Olivia Baron-Clarke are alumni earning their BFA degrees in Dance. We are happy to have them back at America's Ballet School choreographing on our students.

If you have an alumni update, please email Sadie Lehmker at americasballet@gmail.com

DanzAmerica's Project Corner

We are excited to have two new partnerships beginning this month with our school outreach programs.

Ms. Paula and Mr. Osmany went to Orange Grove Middle School, which a magnet school, on October 5, 2011 to begin a school residency there as an additional ballet faculty members.

On October 6, 2011, Ms. Paula traveled to Phillip Shores Elementary School, another magnet school, where DanzAmerica's Project will be exploring outreach opportunities in 2012.

The outreach program is also in contact with the Hillsborough Public School Supervisor of Music for more opportunities in Hillsborough County.



Le Petit Salon de Danse

News and Updates for Our Littlest Dancers

Blending Text and Songs with Classical Terminology

While it may look like “playing”, the songs used on Saturday mornings are important to the development of the students in classical ballet. By giving voice to the movement exercises, the students are able to find the connection between the words that the teacher says and the physical movements that the teacher shows. We want the students to enjoy themselves while they are learning.

Students use this method until they are six or seven years old when the curriculum changes its emphasis to the more physical and technical aspects of ballet. By having the basis of the pre-ballet curriculum, the students are able to pick up advanced movements more quickly and become artists as well as dancers by having the connection between the body and mind.

Here is an in-depth explanation of this curriculum created by Ms. Paula, Ms. Jennie and Ms. Audrey:

Each class on Saturday mornings is cleverly teaching the dancers listening skills and self-discipline through the combination of oral and kinesthetic training (which involves motion, strength, coordination, and the fusion of music and movement). The America’s Ballet School pre-ballet program is based on the pre-ballet curriculum of the Academy of Ballet Florida, which is the home of Ballet Florida in West Palm Beach. We know that this method is successful as Ms. Jennie trained there and many from this Academy who started in the pre-ballet program there have gone on to have professional careers in companies such as New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Houston Ballet, and countless others.

The students are learning the art of ballet which is often story based and conjures up different emotions which they need to learn from the beginning. At such a young age, they should learn to love the creative aspect of it, so when they grow and mature each year as a person, they can then advance more into the depth of the mechanics of the steps. Our motivation for teaching through songs is to teach the art of ballet and not just the mechanics of ballet.

By disguising the basic mechanics of ballet in a fashion that encourages creative thinking, the art of ballet isn’t lost in repeating the same, dull steps to the students as if they were machines. We also emphasize the use of imagination, so even though it may appear as if they are “aimlessly running around with scarves” they are actually feeling the music in their whole body and not just hearing it, which is critical in understanding the core in the art of dance (and this is all researched based).

Most importantly, the faculty is teaching the dancers age-appropriate steps that are not too advanced for the students’ physical capabilities. Executing more advanced steps may look “cute” on your children but it will create bad muscle memory; it takes years to retrain the body on how to correctly accomplish these advanced movements if executed incorrectly at such a young age. Because of this, it is necessary to perfect and master the basic steps before moving onto advanced steps such as a split and passé (again, this is all researched based). By introducing the ballet steps in the correct sequence for each age group, the faculty teaches the physically appropriate vocabulary and the students are able to retain and execute these steps in a creative, mind-expanding manner. Learning in this lively and nurturing way, the dancers will learn and progress more quickly in ballet as well as in other aspects of their lives.



October Student of the Month

Nicole Simpson

Nicole began dancing at the age of 3 in Newnan, Georgia. Her very first role on stage was as a Bumble Bee in "Flight of the Bumble Bee". When the Simpson family moved to Florida, Nicole continued her ballet training while also cross-training in jazz, tap, modern and even flamenco!



Nicole has attended many ballet-focused summer intensive programs including the Joffrey Ballet Intensive in Chicago, the American Ballet Theatre Intensive in Austin, Texas, and again with the American Ballet Theatre in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. She has also participated in annual Nutcracker productions and spring productions, performing many roles through the years. Nicole has performed the role of Clara for three years, and last spring, she was the lead Can-Can dancer in ABS' The Magical Toy Shoppe production.

In the spring of 2010, Nicole joined America's Ballet School and feels that she has found her home here. Through her training here, Nicole competed in the Youth America Grand Prix as a soloist in the semi-finals and as a part of the award-winning ABS ensembles.

This year, Nicole is a senior at Freedom High School. As an honor roll student, she is driven to seek perfection and determined to excel in all areas of her life, making her a perfectly well-rounded and unique person. She has been able to find the balance between her studies and her dancing as her high grades and her commitment and growth in ballet technique prove.

In the fall of 2012, Nicole will attend Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Meyers, Florida. There she will major in psychology.

Nicole would like to thank Ms. Paula and Mr. Osmany for the guidance and opportunities that they have provided. She wouldn't be the dancer she is today without them!

Upcoming Events

NO CLASSES ON HALLOWEEN

Monday, October 31, 2011

Hyde Park Enchanted Tree Lighting Participation Form Due Date

Friday, November 11, 2011

Those who are able to perform on the Friday after Thanksgiving (November 25) at Hyde Park's Enchanted Tree Lighting needs to sign up in writing by Friday, November 11!

Nutcracker Ticket Sales

Begins Saturday, November 12, 2011 at 10am

Tickets for both the USF performance on December 3rd and the Wesley Chapel performance on December 10th will go on sale on Saturday, November 12, 2011 at 10am. Tickets are \$20.

Nutcracker Sponsorship and Advertising Fee

Tuesday, November 15, 2011

All payments must be received no later than November 15. If you are leaving a form with a business, please make sure to write in your students name so that your account will be credited when the business mails in the form and payment. Also, you can check your balance at any time through the front office at ABS.

America's Ballet School

15358 Amberly Drive
Tampa, FL 33647

ABS Holiday Open House

813-558-0800

Friday, November 18, 2011 at 6pm

www.americasballet.com

americasballet@gmail.com