

YOUTH DANCE THEATRE OF MICHIGAN

**A MEMBER
HANDBOOK**

2009-2010

YOUTH DANCE THEATRE OF MICHIGAN, INC.

A Member Handbook

Please note that this is a work in process. There will be changes

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Mission

YOUTH DANCE THEATRE OF MICHIGAN seeks to provide professional caliber dance training through master classes, performance opportunities and enrichment to young dance students, thereby helping to nurture strong minds and healthy bodies in an artistic environment. In turn, YDT encourages company members to demonstrate responsibility and commitment towards a larger goal of entertaining and educating an audience comprised of the communities that support their work.

History

Early History

Dance Arts Academy was a successful Chelsea youth dance studio in the early 1990's with many dedicated students and parents. Together with owner and director Susan Buck-Heinz, these students and parents organized and took trips abroad to Australia and Spain to extend and enhance their dance education. In 1994, Meredith (Hall) Nelson, an enthusiastic first year teacher at the studio suggested the formation of a youth dance company and Dance Arts Performing Ensemble (DAPE) was born. In addition to performance and travel opportunities, company members were afforded the opportunity to attend workshops in various dance forms.

Dance Arts Performing Ensemble was incorporated in 1996 and granted 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status in 1997. The 1997 President of the Board of Directors was Sue Fusco with Donald Locker as Vice-President, Cindy Adams as Secretary, Vickie Kooyers as Treasurer and Laura McCarthy as Artistic Director. When Ms. Fusco moved to Maryland at the end of 1998, Kris Bergman took over the Presidency. Kris served until January 2000, when Donald Locker began his term. Lisa Kurek took up the Presidency in January 2002, and served until January 2006 when Jane Thompson took over the duties.

Over the years, Nancy Zyburt, Vickie Kooyers, Kitty Patridge and Lynda McMillin have served as Treasurer, while the students have been represented by Lindsay Jacobs, Amy Bergman, Kaitlyn Kooyers and Melissa Adams, Emily Leidner and Hallie Walton, Kory Chavey and Maya Chensue, Sarah Hughes and Liisa Locker, Alyssa Alger and Caitlin Burke, Caitlin Burke and Sarah Clark, Natalie Eberts and Hayley Schebor, Audrey Robson and Amy Thompson. The Secretary's position has been held by Cindy Adams, Denise Whitesall, Donald Locker, Brenda Stevens and Beverley Burke.

In late Fall of 2000, we adopted the new name YOUTH DANCE THEATRE OF MICHIGAN, INC. to more accurately reflect the mission and focus of the Company: the training and performance preparation of young people in the art of dance performance. A new logo design was donated by the graphics firm of PWB Marketing Communications Ann Arbor.

While our dance company has always maintained close ties to Dance Arts Academy and, later, the Dance Arts of Chelsea studio, the studio and YDT are distinct and separate. Youth Dance Theatre of Michigan is grateful for the many hours of studio time and other help provide to our Company by Dance Arts of Chelsea.

Productions History

The premier performance of DAPE company members was at Dance Arts Academy's 1995 spring recital. The forty or so original DAPE members remember this less-than-auspicious beginning as the "skirt" dance. Later that year, the first holiday show, *A Christmas Fantasy*, choreographed by Lisa Pelio, was presented. The show included holiday-theme pieces and dances from the second act of *The Nutcracker*.

The group presented its second *A Christmas Fantasy* in 1996. In December of 1997, under the direction of Laura McCarthy, *Let It Snow* was presented. Elaine Economou and Meredith Nelson also choreographed numbers for this show, while Wendi DuBois choreographed the *Snow* number and the second act *Nutcracker* variations. DAPE hired Wendi as Artistic Director beginning with the 1998/1999 season and she has been with us ever since. In 1998, our first complete production of *The Nutcracker* was performed in Chelsea and in Jackson. In 1999 and 2000, *The Nutcracker* was again performed in Chelsea and Jackson, but has been only presented in Chelsea since then. *The Nutcracker* has become a

favorite and has been presented annually on the second weekend in December since 2000.

A Spring show, *Dancers' Collage* was produced in the format of a community dance event in 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002. Meredith Nelson and Elaine Economou contributed direction and choreography for these shows, with area studios and artists also providing their own dancers and choreography.

The core of *The Five Dancing Princesses* was first presented as a small piece within the 2002 *Collage*. For the 2002-2003 season, Wendi reworked *The Five Dancing Princesses* into a full length ballet, which was produced in 2003 and 2004.

For the 2004-2005 season, the Spring show was *Gershwin*, celebrating this uniquely American composer. Dance, voice, piano and Jazz Band performances comprised the variety of entertainment forms incorporated into this production.

In the Spring of 2006, YDT produced its most ambitious show to date, *Sleeping Beauty*. With traditional choreography by Marius Petipa and Wendi's own interpretation of the story and choreography, the show was very well received by the audiences it drew.

The Spring 2007 production was *Encore!*, which included numbers from *Gershwin* as well as new choreography specifically for this show.

In 2008, YDT presented *Five Dancing Princesses* again to appreciative audiences.

The 2009 Spring season production

Structure

YOUTH DANCE THEATRE OF MICHIGAN, INC. is governed by a Board of Directors according to By-Laws¹ approved by the membership. The By-Laws are required to be reviewed by the Board every two years. The size of the Board is flexible, according to the By-Laws, to allow the Board to bring in as many or as few people as it feels is necessary to accomplish its duties.

Officers serve for two-year terms, after which time, the Board must either re-authorize their service or choose another individual to fill that role. The Artistic Director and Administrative Manager are paid staff positions, with compensation determined annually by the Board. At-large Board members are chosen by the Board to serve two-year terms. At-large terms need not be voted on by the Board for extension.

The Board consists of the Artistic Director, President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Administrative Manager, and a number of at-large members, including at least one Student Representative. All but the Artistic Director, the Administrative Manager and the President may vote on issues brought before the Board.

The primary duties of the Board are to set policy, raise funds to operate the Company, and administer those funds for the greatest member benefit. The Board establishes policies which represent, in its best judgment, appropriate behaviour of the Company, its Members, and its Directors.

¹ A copy of the By-Laws is available from any Board Member. The current version was approved on 08 February 2004.

Policies

This section contains a number of YDT policy statements. All of these statements are incorporated in the dancer contract, which members are required to execute, or are in the By-Laws which are implicitly part of the Company's contracts. Questions and suggestions should be directed to a member of the Board of Directors.

Non-Discrimination (By-Laws Clause)

The YDT By-Laws state, in part, **"YDT is committed to non-discrimination in the administration of its performing arts, educational and community outreach programs and special events."**

General (Member Contract Clauses)

1. I will at all times behave in such a manner that I represent YDT well, both personally and professionally
2. I will care for all YDT properties (costumes, accessories, shoes, etc.) that are entrusted to me, returning them promptly and in excellent condition. I understand that all costumes are the property of YDT.
3. I will respect and care for any YDT rehearsal space, especially at the Dance Arts of Chelsea studios. I will keep my personal belongings inside a locker when possible or placed neatly in front of a locker. I will practice good housekeeping habits.
4. I understand that all company placement and casting decisions are final. I will address, in writing, any questions or concerns to the Artistic Director or the Administrative Manager.
5. I agree to comply with all published policies and procedures for notification of absences from YDT performance rehearsals and other mandatory events.
6. I understand that my health may affect my ability to participate in a YDT program, production or function, or my participation may affect my health. If at any time the Artistic Director is concerned about my health, he/she may require me to obtain written clearance from a physician to participate. Clearance by the physician to participate must be obtained on the YDT physical clearance form. Clearance by the physician does not guarantee participation. The Artistic Director will make the final decision.

Mandatory Classes (Member Contract Clauses)

1. I will enroll in and regularly attend no less than the minimum required dance classes that correspond to my YDT placement and my dance growth objectives.
2. If cast in a partnering role, I will enroll in and attend additional classes as may be required by the Artistic Director to build and maintain the kind of strength and placement needed for a safe partnering experience.
3. I understand that failure to attend required classes may result in the loss of a role within a production or expulsion from the company.

Mandatory General Membership Meeting Participation (Member Contract Clauses)

1. I understand that general membership meetings will be called at least once a year, and no more than twice a year, and that I will attend these meetings with an adult representative and that unexcused absences from the meetings may result in my removal from YDT.

Performance Rehearsal Participation (Member Contract Clauses)

1. I understand that mandatory attendance performance rehearsals will be called and I agree to attend these rehearsals.
2. I agree to attend all regularly scheduled rehearsals unless prior approval of an absence has been granted.
3. I understand that an unexcused absence from any rehearsal will result in my removal from the performance cast.
4. I will arrive at all rehearsals at least 15 minutes before my scheduled time (at least 30 minutes if cast in a partnering role) and use this time to properly warm- up before rehearsal begins.

Performance Requirements (Member Contract Clauses)

1. I agree to provide basic performance make- up for my personal use as required by the Make-up Chairperson.
2. I agree to provide basic performance garments and/or accessories (liners, tights, pointe shoes, etc.) as required by the Costume Chairperson.
3. I agree to arrive at performances no later than dancer call time and be prepared (hair, make-up, etc.) in the manner specified by the Artistic Director and/or Production Chairperson.
4. I agree to participate in all Company warm- ups prior to a performance.

Conferences (Member Contract Clauses)

1. I agree to participate in a conference with the Artistic Director at the end of the year to assess my development and my future goals.
2. I understand that YDT artistic staff is available for student/teacher and/or parent/teacher conferences at any time during the year.
3. I understand that conferences with the artistic staff will be scheduled at a mutually agreeable time and location.
4. I agree to request conferences with the Artistic Director in writing

Membership Dues and Fees (Member Contract Clauses)

1. I understand that annual membership dues are required of each member. I agree to pay or make arrangements to pay my yearly dues within 2 weeks of notification of acceptance.
2. I understand that the audition fee and the membership dues are non- refundable.

3. I understand that YDT offers scholarships to help pay for member dues and fees for dancers with financial need. I understand that I cannot request scholarship assistance for more than 2 years.

Volunteering (Member Contract Clauses)

1. I understand that my adult representative(s) and I are expected to volunteer service time toward the execution of YDT performances and/or other activities.

Fund raising and Donations (Member Contract Clauses)

1. I understand that my adult representative(s) and I are expected to participate in YDT fund raising events.
2. I understand that my adult representative(s) and I are encouraged to make additional donations of cash or in-kind services in support of YDT goals.

Productions

As a performance-oriented dance company, YOUTH DANCE THEATRE OF MICHIGAN produces two major shows each season. The purpose of these shows is to expose the dancers to the processes involved in being a part of a major production. Rehearsing, costuming and coordinating with other dancers and staff are parts of this experience.

One production which has become an annual event is *The Nutcracker*. This show is generally a moneymaker for the Company and is relatively constant in its content. The show does change each year, though, as various dancers with varied skills move through our ranks.

As described in the History section of this document, YDT has produced several different shows for presentation in the Spring. *The Dancers' Collage* was the first form of Spring show produced, allowing YDT dancers to present their own short numbers, as well as to present dances from other Companies in the area. Since 2002, YDT has produced a full-length ballet or a focused theme-based show as its Spring show, as the Collage form limited the development of the dancers' talents.

Master Classes

As an educational institution, YOUTH DANCE THEATRE OF MICHIGAN sponsors as many Master Classes each year for which we can find space and time.

The purpose of a Master Class is to introduce students to instructors and techniques outside of their normal experience. Master Classes are important to teach flexibility in study and method and an appreciation of different styles of teaching and learning.

A Master Class is taught by an instructor not normally associated with the Studio or Company. YDT has had instructors from The Alvin Ailey Dance Company, Dayton Ballet, Ballet Met (of Columbus, OH) as well as other local, regional and more remote Companies.

Certain Master Classes are only suited to more advanced students, while others may be suitable for more varied levels of experience. YDT makes every effort to ensure that all students who may qualify for a particular Master Class are notified and enabled to attend.

Behaviour

Dance makes certain demands on the individuals engaged in it. In order to facilitate learning and promote appropriate attitudes we have adopted this list of expectations.

1. No jewelry is to be worn in class. The list includes dangling earrings (small post earrings are acceptable,) watches, necklaces, chains, rings and bracelets.
Any hard edged adornment presents the danger of injury. Swinging earrings or chains are a distraction.
2. Long hair and bangs or fringes must be securely pinned up or tied, away from the face and neck.
The neck area must be visible to allow the teacher to make corrections. A misalignment in the cervical spine can alert the teacher to problems further down the spine. Additionally, students often develop the tic of flicking the hair off the face which interferes with the acquisition of a clean technique.
3. The attire for all dance classes is:
Girls: tights (pink for ballet, black for modern) and solid colored leotard.
Boys: tights and white T- shirt, tucked into the tights.
Footwear: ballet slippers for ballet, jazz shoes for jazz, bare feet for modern.
In order to correct a motion, the teacher must see the body of the student. The mirror is also a resource for self- evaluation and correction. Seeing is an important tool for improving technique, therefore baggy pants or sweaters, little skirts, leg warmers bunched around the ankles or any other form of dress that hides the body are unacceptable. If the studio is cold at the start of a class, a sweat shirt and leg warmers will be allowed.
4. In the studio, a specific decorum needs to be practiced. A courteous attitude toward the teacher and fellow students means:
 - 4.1. All chatter stops when the teacher enters the studio. If the teacher is already in the studio, students must enter quietly and respectfully. If students enter after the class has started, they must explain their lateness and apologise. If students need to leave class early, they must advise the teacher before class begins and they must come up to the teacher before leaving the studio. Under no circumstances must they leave the studio without approaching the teacher first.
 - 4.2. There is no talking during class. However, students are encouraged to ask questions when they do not understand a correction or need an exercise to be clarified.
 - 4.3. When given a correction, students must demonstrate that they understand by performing the motion. When a correction is given while an exercise is in progress, students must acknowledge hearing the correction by making eye contact with the teacher and smiling or saying thank you.
 - 4.4. No chewing gum in the studio.
 - 4.5. No food or drink in the studios except for water.
 - 4.6. Avoid wearing perfume, perfumed oils or body lotions. Many people are allergic to perfumes and lotions transfers to the floor, creating a slippery surface.

- 4.7. Applause after class is an old tradition in dance. By clapping, you are thanking the teacher. Even if you have not had a very good class, you should acknowledge, with some degree of enthusiasm, the effort of the teacher.
5. If there is a medical reason for not participating in class or for participating on a limited basis, students must explain the problem to the teacher before the class begins. In the case of an injury or illness that prevents students from participating for an extended period, a doctor's note is necessary.
6. Absences may be excused by the Artistic Director if sufficient notice is given. Emergency absences may be granted under extreme circumstances.
7. A roll call will be taken at the time identified in the schedule as "dancer call." All dancers are required to be present, on-stage, for dancer call. Missing dancer call is the same as missing the rehearsal or performance.
8. At the discretion of the teacher, choreographer or Artistic Director, severely late or inappropriately dressed students may be asked to watch the class, rather than participating. A dance class proceeds in incremental fashion, warming the muscles and imparting knowledge that will be used in later exercises. Lateness prevents the appropriate warm-up and training necessary for effective rehearsals and classes, as well as disrupting others' learning.
9. It is the responsibility of the dancer to notify the Artistic Director and/or Administrative Manager as early as possible of any scheduling conflicts. You must provide a schedule of outside commitments which may conflict with the Company's scheduled rehearsals. This is the only way that planning can be effective.

We understand that students are wont to insist on the free expression of their individuality. However the discipline of dance encourages them to seek distinction in more meaningful ways, such as excelling in the pursuit of their chosen art form. Therefore the expectations outlined above are to be considered integral to the learning that takes place.

The staff of YDT have high expectations and expect the students to meet high standards. We also believe in the unique talent of each student who is accepted into our Company. But talent is never enough; like a flower, it needs fertile soil, and appropriate care to bloom. By honoring the above directives, we can create together an atmosphere that allows us to concentrate on important issues, such as acquiring a broader vocabulary for self-expression and nurturing a work ethic that can serve the individual for the rest of life.

Volunteering

As with any non- profit organization, YDT relies on volunteers to perform many tasks which are too specialized to be hired out. Such tasks as costume fitting, publicity materials design and distribution, ushering, set constructing and assisting back- stage fall into this category.

Contacts

Email is a very reliable way to reach an individual within our organization. All of the Board members and staff have email addresses at youthdancetheatre.org. The web site's About Us section has the officers' and staff email addresses; the next page has the rest of the Board members' email addresses.

The memberinfo email list is used by Staff and Board members to distribute important messages to the members. This is a closed list, and only Staff and Board members are allowed to post to it. If you have an announcement that needs to get to the membership, let a Board member or Staff member know.

Please be sure to notify info@youthdancetheatre.org if your email address changes.