
A GUIDE TO CHOOSING A DANCE TEACHER

Every intending dance student or parent is faced with the question of how to choose a dance teacher. There are several points to consider based on your requirements and interests and some of the main ones are listed here.

*** WHICH DANCE STYLE OR DISCIPLINE IS OF INTEREST TO YOU?**

The most popular current styles are Classical Ballet, Jazz, Tap, Hip Hop, Salsa, Latin, Ballroom and Theatrical, including Acrobatic Dance. There are other more esoteric styles of dance taught such as National, Folk and Belly Dance, etc

*** WHAT IS YOUR OBJECTIVE?**

You may wish to become involved in dance as a purely recreational pastime, for exercise, or as a vocation leading to performing or teaching. Broadly speaking children enrol in dance courses to progress through a structured syllabus, to sit for examinations or just for enrichment. Additional activities may include taking part in competitions, summer schools and performances. Adults often pursue dance simply as a hobby seeking only the satisfaction of being involved in the joy of dance. Examinations and Medal Tests are also open to adults however, should they wish to gain a qualification - and the sense of achievement that goes with it!

*** WHAT QUALIFICATIONS SHOULD A TEACHER HOLD?**

It may be argued that it is necessary to gain structured qualifications in order to pass on knowledge, but it is also true that many excellent teachers have taken a different path in gaining the necessary knowledge and experience to teach, for instance as professional dancers, rehearsal masters and mistresses and choreographers.

However when it comes to teaching children there are certain specialised and essential elements which a teacher must have knowledge of, and a recognised Teaching Certificate or Diploma is the best guarantee to parents that the teacher does possess these skills, which will ensure their child is correctly and carefully taught.

*** WHAT IS A GOOD TEACHER?**

We believe that teachers regardless of their main area of focus, should provide enjoyment, encouragement, education and expression through dance. Children particularly should enjoy learning to dance beyond just moving to music. We believe that a student who is stimulated will learn more readily and perform better. Whether in class, in an examination or on stage it is important to encourage them to give of their best to their own level of ability, without being pressured into achieving unrealistic standards.

*** SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK OF THE INTENDING TEACHER**

What qualifications do you and/or your teachers hold?

Which styles of dance do you teach?

Which age groups do you teach?

What is the class size (minimum & maximum)?

Do you regularly prepare students for examinations?

What opportunities do your students have to perform?

*** WHICH DANCE ORGANISATION / EXAMINATION BODY DO YOU BELONG TO?**

There are a number of dance syllabus organisations conducting examinations internationally. Some of these cater for several dance disciplines, some for only one. They will usually conduct examinations with outside examiners once or twice a year at a specified period.

*** WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF EXAMINATIONS?**

For a teacher to become a member of an examining organisation, they must meet specified levels of training. The members are provided with a structured curriculum that allows for progressive mastery of technique and which should help them keep up with current trends. Organisations hold regular seminars for teachers as well as extra-curricular events such as competitions or awards for the stimulation and improvement of their students.

Examinations conducted by the organisation provide an externally assessed indicator of the students' aptitude and level of advancement. This also provides a goal for the student to aim for and they will receive a grading, a certificate and a report of their achievement.

*** WHAT IS THE TEACHER'S / SCHOOL'S RATE OF SUCCESS & PARTICIPATION?**

Most teachers will be happy to share their results gained in examinations and/or competitions and this can be an indicator of their effectiveness as a teacher. Some will allow you to view a class before enrolling or allow the child to take an introductory class.

*** OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

Naturally things like what fees are charged, the appearance and suitability of the premises, the location and the schedule of lessons are important issues to consider. You may also want to enquire whether or not the teacher carries appropriate public liability and professional indemnity insurance.

*** IN CONCLUSION**

Remember that when you are seeking to choose a dance teacher or school, you are the consumer but you have the responsibility to do your research and make sure that the services offered by the teacher are appropriate to your needs.

Do not be afraid to ask questions and discuss your needs frankly. Once classes have started, if you have a problem communicate with the teacher or studio principal. Do bear in mind that not every aspiring dancer will achieve stardom or even make it to the stage, but they should all enjoy the journey, and there will be countless other benefits.

*** EXPANDING THE FIELD FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Although a teacher may be affiliated with a certain dance organisation, each one is an individual with their own style of teaching and profile. They have different pairs of eyes to look at things in a different way and they imprint their style and accent on the work they teach and on the students. To become rounded dancers and performers, students will benefit from being exposed to a range of good professional teachers as they progress.

*** FURTHER INFORMATION**

For information about CSTD, our examination system and current events in Singapore please see other sections on this website, or contact the Singapore Organiser, Ms Barbara Hannan at 6475 5660 or email: cstd_svcs@yahoo.com.sg. For information on teachers and events in Australia please visit www.comdance.asn.au where you can find contact numbers for state organisers who will direct you to teachers in their area.