

# 12 Things You Must Know... Before Attending Any Summer Dance Program

A Free Report from *The Southwest Classical Dance Institute*

## 1. Why Are Summer Programs Important?

Not only do summer dance programs provide students with a break in the yearly training, they are also great opportunities to meet like minded young dancers and experience different places, teachers and styles of dance. They are magnets for the more serious students from around the nation and become centers for encouragement and inspiration for the developing artist. Learning to become one's own person is also an important part of developing a student into an artist. Their ability to express themselves, their thoughts and opinions as artists, requires a certain level of independence and sense of who they are as individuals. Time away from home in a controlled and supportive environment is a great way to start making that transition from child to young adult.

*The Southwest Classical Dance Institute Summer Dance Program* attracts students from all across the country to experience a little of "the Old West" in lovely Prescott, AZ. Sedona with its incredible Red Rocks, and Jerome, an artist colony and historic mining town, are just a short drive away. Students live, dance, and play together making new friendships that will last a lifetime.

## 2. Making Connections

Connections dancers make with other students as well as choreographers, directors, teachers and professionals in the dance community are extremely important. Getting "out there", being seen, and working with these individuals helps when it comes time to audition for a company or apply for a university position. A letter of recommendation, personal introduction, or even simply including their names on a resume can aid students in these endeavors. Friendships with fellow dancers are also rewarding and helpful. The dance world is very small, and dancers will invariably bump into each other as time goes by. Young people greatly benefit from having a peer support group in any situation; having those connections and friendships can be very beneficial. For example when auditioning for a company, having a friend in the company as an introduction is always better than attending a "cattle call" audition. Or when joining a new ballet company, having friends in a new city and new workplace can make the transition easier.

*The Southwest Classical Dance Institute Summer Dance Program* attracts students from all across the country and is the perfect place to meet other serious ballet students. Master teachers from the world over come to SCDI SDP to guide students in their training; making connections with these professionals in the field is very important for the aspiring dancer.

## 3. Questions To Ask Yourself...

There are many summer dance programs of various sizes, dance styles and intensity levels all over the United States. All of the major ballet schools have programs that can run from 2 to 7 weeks for ages 10 to 18. Many smaller schools also have summer workshops or camps of their own, sometimes incorporating local events and culture to enhance the students' experience. Choosing where to go is an important decision. Answering some of the following questions can help to narrow your choices:

- How much time away from home am I and my child comfortable with?
- How much supervision outside of the studio do I want for my child?
- How focused and intense do I and my child want the dance training to be?
- Does the program have a balance of hard work in the studio vs. outside fun activities?
- Does my child want to go to a big city or not? Do I approve?

*The Southwest Classical Dance Institute Summer Dance Program* is three weeks long---just about the right amount of time for either a first summer away from home, or for the veteran SDP attendee! Intense training in the studio is balanced with fun recreational activities. Prescott, AZ, the location of the SCDI SDP, is a quaint and beautiful small town, with many art galleries and shops.

## 4. Who will be teaching my child?

When deciding on a summer program, make sure to do research. It is probably safe to assume the bigger schools will have reputable teachers who will undoubtedly have had professional level training in dance, a professional performing career, and sometimes university schooling and/or teacher training. However, these credentials do not guarantee a teacher teaches well. Reputation and the success of former students are the biggest factors in evaluating teachers. It is of utmost importance for teachers to have themselves been schooled in the methodology they teach.

*The Southwest Classical Dance Institute Summer Dance Program* has a world-class artistic staff. The Artistic Directors, Joshua and Natasha Brooksher, both had extensive performing careers and their former students are dancers in major ballet companies throughout the world. All members of the Guest Faculty are nationally and internationally recognized artists and teachers.

## 5. In the studio

Summer dance programs should offer an array of classes with the main focus on classical ballet: ballet technique, pointe, variations/repertoire, pas de deux, character, mime, choreography, modern, stretch/strength, Pilates, modern, jazz or even music lessons. All of these classes contribute to some aspect of training a well rounded, well informed dancer. Some schools also incorporate an end of program performance, so rehearsals in preparation for that would also be a part of the schedule. Performing should not be the focal point, however; learning and increasing knowledge should be the main objective, as there will be plenty of time for performing later.

*The Southwest Classical Dance Institute Summer Dance Program* offers a selected variety of classes aimed at intense focus on ballet. Daily ballet technique, as well as pointe, repertoire, men's variations, pas de deux, ballet theory, character, modern or jazz and stretch/conditioning classes will be part of the schedule. Weekly seminars on topics such as "Stage Hair and Makeup", "Pointe Shoes", and "Life As A Professional Dancer" will give the faculty the opportunity to relay important information and tips to SDP students that would not ordinarily be addressed in the classroom.

## 6. Which technique should my child study?

"Ballet is just ballet, right?" Contrary to what most people believe about ballet, there are many different styles and techniques. So what is the difference between a style and a technique? A style of ballet refers to the specific way in which the material is danced. For example, the style of arms used for Swan Lake is very different from that used for Giselle or Balanchine's "Who Cares?", each a distinct style. The technique, however, is the way in which a dancer is trained to do the basic steps which make up all ballet, regardless of style. The best way to determine which technique to study under is one of versatility---ask "if I train in this certain way, will I still be able to dance other styles as well?"

R.A.D. and Cecchetti methods of technique appeal to many people because of their system of grades and exams, which gives students a concrete sense of their progression. However both of these techniques are outdated for today's technically demanding choreography. They also both emphasize training muscles in a way which creates stocky thigh and buttock muscles rather than the long streamlined bodies we now associate with classical ballet. Training in the Balanchine style (or some now refer to it as a technique) can be limiting on a dancer's ability to adapt to other styles of ballet. For instance, it is quite easy for a Bournonville (Danish style technique) or Vaganova trained dancer to adapt to the Balanchine style of elongated and exaggerated, slightly jazzy movement. However, Balanchine trained dancers have a very difficult time adjusting to a romantic style ballet like Giselle, or Sleeping Beauty, the ultimate in classical technique.

The Vaganova methodology of training classical dance is the strongest base from which a dancer can springboard into other avenues if they so choose. All of the truly great ballerinas and premier danseurs of the last century have come from this training. Dancers of this caliber have been able to dance in any company across the globe, no matter what was asked of them by the choreography. The Vaganova method uses a very specific, detailed and scientific approach to training the muscles and bodies of students to accomplish clean and graceful lines, and great technical fireworks. It also incorporates a philosophy in the training of giving of oneself, which develops the student in body, mind and spirit. It is a method which provides a true mastery, within which lies the ability of connection through individual expression.

*The Southwest Classical Dance Institute Summer Dance Program* is dedicated to providing Vaganova based ballet training. Faculty members of the SCDI SDP have been trained in this methodology, and are passionate about passing on this valuable training heritage.

## 7. Where to go?

Summer Dance Programs are a fantastic way to experience a different part of the country, and enjoy different cultures. There are a variety of schools in both big cities and small towns. Weigh carefully what kind of experience your child wants to have, and which place will be most conducive to that experience.

*The Southwest Classical Dance Institute Summer Dance Program* has the best of all worlds. Students train in state of the art studio facilities at The Dance Studio, and are housed in historic downtown Prescott, AZ, with beautiful tall trees, and lovely streets lined with shops and galleries. Arizona is an amazing place to visit if you have never been "out West" before...cowboys really do exist out here!

## 8. What kind of supervision is provided?

Usually programs in larger cities are much less supervised. Dancers have a few hours a day of classes, and aside from evening curfew and a few scheduled activities, students are on their own for the rest of the time. This provides a lot of freedom for sightseeing, shopping, and dining etc. However this type of arrangement also assumes a certain level of maturity and independence, and may not be suitable for everyone, especially young dancers.

Summer dance programs in smaller towns, and smaller schools, tend to have a more family-oriented atmosphere, with more supervision. A few also include outside activities in their fees, in addition to food and housing, as well as scheduling informal gatherings. When students are allowed out on their own, they are also in a safer, less-extreme environment.

*The Southwest Classical Dance Institute Summer Dance Program* is dedicated to providing an educational, fun and safe summer experience. All staff will be involved in the recreational activities, and are on hand during the class day. Students will have Residential Assistants living with them at the dormitory facility.

## 9. Is my child ready?

If your ballet student is young (under the age of 15), be careful about where you choose to send them. They will be away from home, friends and family for an extended period of time and their ballet technique is still forming its foundations and may not yet be ready for a school with an extreme

style. Try to choose a school which stresses fundamental training. There will be plenty of time when they are mature enough as an artist to make judgments on style and approach that are in good taste. If your dancer is 17 or older, choosing a summer program that will help further their goals of obtaining professional employment or placement in a university program of study should be considered carefully. Place them in a program that offers the experience of working with prominent directors, choreographers and teachers. Being seen by industry professionals who they will be auditioning for within a year has great advantages. Name and face recognition can go a long way to furthering them on the path to achieving their goals.

*The Southwest Classical Dance Institute Summer Dance Program* accepts students from ages 10 to 18. Whatever your child's age is, SCDI offers an enriching experience in a supportive environment. SCDI is well connected to many leading teachers, choreographers and directors in the ballet world. Members of the faculty are directors of companies, schools, and choreographers in their own right, making a student's time at the summer program important for their future development as well as a time of fun and focused training.

## 10. Outside the studio

Another aspect to consider is recreation. Does the summer program you are researching provide some time away from the studio, perhaps to go to a museum, or a sightseeing activity? Or do they pretty much leave students to their own devices? If fun and recreation is not provided in some form, young people have a way of finding it for themselves, sometimes with negative consequences. Summer programs which integrate leisure alongside an intensive studio atmosphere help to inspire the students in the studio, but nurture their spirits outside the classroom.

*The Southwest Classical Dance Institute Summer Dance Program* provides enjoyable and creative activities, as well as proper supervision outside of the studio including outings to The World's Oldest Rodeo, to Sedona and a Trail Horse Adventure and cookout, and to the Grand Canyon on a Railroad outing.

## 11. Life away from home...

Whether a program includes outside activities will also determine how much spending money a student brings with them. Having large sums of cash on hand is never a good idea, however having some money for a special dinner, movie or souvenir is helpful. Buy traveler's checks or similar debit cards to insure not only the safety of their funds, but also to help them to budget their money. Also consider if the school has a safe place to keep their spending money while they are there. Make sure to know the climate to which they are going and pack clothes accordingly. Try to pack a change of clothes and their ballet/pointe shoes in their carry-on if they are flying in-case their luggage gets lost. Provide enough dancewear to last them at least five full days, and make sure they get tips on how to do their laundry.

*The Southwest Classical Dance Institute Summer Dance Program* will send all enrolled students a packet of information with all kinds of information including everything they need to bring with them. Residential Assistants will be available for all students who need help with any of these kinds of issues.

## 12. How much does it cost?

Whichever summer dance program you are researching, make sure to look into all costs associated with attending. Will housing be included, or will you have to provide accommodations? Are meals included (many programs provide 2 meals per day)? Are the activities a part of the program, or are they an "extra", to be paid for separately?

*The Southwest Classical Dance Institute Summer Dance Program* is designed as an all-inclusive package. tuition, registration fees, activities, and transportation to all activities, are included in the cost. A housing, meal, and local transportation plan is available for students planning on boarding at the summer program.

Wherever you end up deciding to send your child for a summer dance program, they should have an open mind, be ready to make new friends, and learn as much as they can while they are in this special environment. If they work hard and have fun, it will be summer they will never forget!

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Scholarships available. The Southwest Classical Dance Institute admits student of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.