

The CCA & Its' Syllabus

The Cecchetti Council of America began in 1934 as a Dancing Masters of Michigan committee. In 1951, the committee received its non-profit educational organization status. The Cecchetti Council of America is dedicated to maintaining the standards and the method of ballet training established by Maestro Enrico Cecchetti. Aided by the syllabi of the Cecchetti Society in London, England, the CCA developed the first uniformed system of teaching ballet in the United States. For more in-depth information about the CCA, please visit www.cecchetti.org.

The CCA syllabi are leveled **Primary I, II, III, Grade I, II, III, IV, Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced, and Diploma**. Each syllabus develops physical technique, artistry, and theoretical knowledge which progresses students systematically onto the next level of training. Examinations for each syllabus level (Grade I – Diploma) are required for teachers to gain CCA membership. Progression through each level is not based on a yearly pre-determined schedule; it is based on a student's personal progress.

Primary I, II, III are not required examinations. However, the syllabus material is used at MSD in order to properly prepare students for Grade I.

Grade I and II are the lower level syllabi. Posture, proper body alignment, and the coordination of the arms, legs, and head are the primary focus in these levels.

Grade III and IV build upon the foundation set in Grade I and II, but also require the student to demonstrate strength, stability, and artistry at the same time.

Elementary and Intermediate syllabi are the first of the professional levels. These syllabi transition the student into the last two professional levels by building upon the material set in Grades I – IV, and by maintaining the concepts and principles set down by Maestro Cecchetti.

Advance and Diploma syllabi are the professional levels meant to develop a dancer into a soloist. Many excerpts from Classical and Romantic ballets are included in each syllabus.

Examinations

As students show the necessary commitment and progression in their ballet training, they may be invited to participate in a CCA student examination. Examinations are generally held in Wixom, MI in December, March, and June. There is an additional fee to participate in an examination.

Examinations are demonstrative and theoretical. In order to be considered as a candidate for an examination, a student must be able to demonstrate each exercise precisely while maintaining proper placement and body alignment. Students must be able to verbally identify and translate (from French to English) body, feet, arm, and leg positions, as well as each barre and center exercise.

It is beneficial for all ballet students to learn the CCA examination syllabus; however, not all students will benefit by taking the actual examination. A student will not be invited to examine if there is any doubt as to whether they will pass. A student's self-confidence is more important than taking an exam. Students are not required to participate in an examination, and may decline the invitation without affecting their progression through the MSD levels.

Ballet Technique

Maria's School of Dance



Updated Fall 2013

Ballet – A Brief History

Ballet's history is deeply rooted in the French and Italian Royal court dances of the Medieval and Renaissance periods. In 1669 Louis XIV, established the Académie Royale de Musique, which would eventually house today's oldest running national ballet company, the Paris Opera Ballet.

During the 1700's, ballet as we view it today, took shape. It was separated from the courtly dances. The technical skills vocabulary were defined and notated, and the use of turnout was deemed necessary. During this time, men dominated the starring roles in ballet choreography, not the women. Women were required to wear large, heavy costumes that restricted their movement. Eventually, these restrictive costumes became lighter and shorter, allowing women to dance in more prominent rolls. The use of soft and flexible footwear came into use as well.

In the early 1800's, Marie Taglioni was credited as being the first to dance en pointe. As pointe work improved during the Romantic Era, so did the status of women in ballet. Many of the Classical Ballets seen on stage today were choreographed during this era. Ballets such as Giselle, La Sylphide, The Sleeping Beauty, Swan Lake, and of course The Nutcracker are currently enjoyed by audiences all over the world, with most, if not all of their original choreography intact.

Ballet at MSD

At Maria's School of Dance, students are taught the Cecchetti method of ballet. This method is based on the original teachings of Maestro Enrico Cecchetti, and is the basis by which the Cecchetti Council of America developed the graded syllabus used in our classes. It is our belief that students taught using this method are more focused and develop a stronger base of ballet technique because it is broken down into tangible goals that each student can accomplish.

Class Format

The format of each class contains a set of warm up exercises at the barre, center floor work, and traveling patterns. Primary classes begin class without the use of the barre. This allows students to learn the warm up combinations without distraction and with the aid of the mirror. It also trains the students' balance.

Classes Meeting Twice Weekly

On "Technique Only" days, for classes meeting twice weekly, the entire class time is dedicated to learning and mastering the requirements for the graded examination for that level. All ballet students will receive an examination study guide. Study guide material is considered homework. All students will be expected to answer all the material in the study guide.

The Discipline of Dance

Preparation is the Key to Success!

Ballet is a disciplined art form. However the discipline begins before the student enters the studio. Students must prepare themselves for class. Attire, hair, and shoes all must be ready for class. Being on time for class is expected. Missing warm-up exercises is an unsafe practice for dancers, and can result in an injury. Being late to enter class is a distraction for the other students and the instructor. If a student should run late to class, be respectful and enter class as quietly as possible, so as not to disrupt others.

Attendance

Consistent attendance is imperative to a student's progression. Poor attendance not only affects the student, but also the class. It is difficult for instructors to complete choreography when students are missing. A student's attendance is taken into consideration when instructors determine class placement for the upcoming year. If a student is going to be absent, please call and inform the office. Instructors like to know the reason for an absence.

Proper Attire – Dress Like a Dancer, and You Will Feel Like a Dancer

As a disciplined art form, proper class attire is a must. In order for the instructor to teach students proper alignment and body placement, students must dress so their body can be seen. If the body cannot be seen, the dancer cannot be trained. Proper dance attire also allows students to dance safely, unifies the class as a team, and minimizes visual distractions.

Ladies Attire

Ladies are expected to wear a black leotard (any style), pink tights, and must have pink split sole slippers. Skirts and other extra clothing are not allowed to be worn, because these items hide the line of the body. Please leave extra clothing items outside the studio room.

Hair must be securely fastened in a tight bun, and out of the dancer's face. Students with hair shorter than shoulder length must have the front of their hair securely pulled away from their face. The following items are necessary to assemble a bun:

- A Ponytail Holder (not a scrunchie)
- Hair Pins (most hair require both pin types)
- Hair Net (Conair Invisible Edge Hair Nets are excellent and can be found in most stores)
- Octopus Jaw Clips (these are acceptable when used with a ponytail holder)

Gentlemen's Attire

Gentlemen are expected to wear a white plain T-shirt, black shorts or black jazz pants, and black split sole slippers. The tighter fitting the clothing is, the better the student can be seen and corrected.