

Dancer & Parent Handbook

PHILADELPHIA
DANCE
THEATRE

Profile

Philadelphia Dance Theatre is the region's premier classical ballet school and performing company. Under the direction of Joy Delaney Capponi the school provides exceptional dance training for beginner through pre-professional students. Alumni have gone on to study with internationally recognized schools. PDT'S performing company presents an acclaimed Nutcracker each December and a new works each Spring.

Mission

Through a safe, nurturing, positive and structured environment that promotes excellence in dance and individual accomplishment, Philadelphia Dance Theatre prides itself in offering a premier venue for children to actively and to authentically experience the world of dance.

Quality training by dedicated teachers, currently active as professional artists, allows our young people to continually observe the connection between training and results.

Production development, polished performance, commitment to the company, and personal responsibility, are all emphasized as integral components of the complete dance experience at PDT.

We strive to provide this unique experience to all children willing to dedicate the time and effort required to participate.

Outreach

At Philadelphia Dance Theatre, we are dedicated to bringing high quality, professional performances to the community at an affordable price.

Our annual performances include the holiday favorite The Nutcracker and a Spring performance featuring both original and classic works. For each of these productions, our community provides the financial support to donate seating for various charitable events while several of our more experienced dancers volunteer to teach in local public school, helping to make dance more accessible to a broader community.

Each year, PDT several community scholarships are offered which provide students and families in need with funding for an entire year of dance classes.

Repertoire

At Philadelphia Dance Theatre, we take pride in presenting professional performances that are affordable & accessible to the community.

We premiered our version of the popular classic The Nutcracker in 1999 and are delighted to continue this holiday tradition each winter.

Other staged productions include A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Emperor and the Kite, Cinderella, Divertimento, Peter and the Wolf, Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty, Western Suite, and The Wizard of Oz.

Regional Dance America

In 2006 PDT became a member of Regional Dance America (RDA). RDA is a national organization of over 92 dance companies which are divided into five regions throughout the United States. To become a member of RDA the organization must have 501(c)3 non-profit organization status, produce two major concerts annually and meet various other technical and artistic standards.

Each year PDT welcomes guest choreographers to work with dancers in our senior level company. In early spring an RDA Adjudicator visits each member company to watch a company class and new works that are to be evaluated and potentially selected for the festival performance. The dance Festival is held each year in late Spring by a host company. Dancers age 11 and up are eligible to attend the Festivals. Dancers must be at least 13 to perform at Festival or to be cast in works that will be adjudicated for Festival.

RDA is not a competition, but an enriching opportunity for performing, critique and growth for all dancers, directors and educators who attend. Board members, adjudicators and instructors of RDA are comprised of professionals currently active or who have formally held high profile positions with nationally recognized dance organizations. For more information about Regional Dance America, please visit www.regional-dance-america.org.

Membership Policies

All dancers who have auditioned for and accepted company membership, must follow PDT's policies. PDT is committed to providing excellent productions for the community and it's dancers. It is impossible to be a part of this organization without an intense level of commitment, thus it is important to be clear of the expectations that lie ahead of you. If you are feeling at all conflicted after reading this handbook then closely reflect on your potential membership. The rules are not negotiable and are in place to maintain quality and pursue a higher level of excellence. No more is asked of each dancer than what is given in return.

Expectations

Parents are responsible for keeping informed about schedules and obligations throughout the season. While we do our best to provide consistency in our communication, as with any large scale endeavor, changes occur. We rely heavily on email to communicate with the entire performing company, therefore, it is essential to have an e-mail account that is checked daily. We will also post critical updates at the studio. Please be flexible in your understanding of what it takes to make this work. Make a phone call, check in to the studio once in a while, and join the many volunteers who help to put these productions together.

Rehearsals must be attended regularly. Dancers and Parents shall be responsible for regular attendance at ALL called rehearsals. If there is an absence anticipated it should be noted on your contract. If an absence is sudden, due to illness, the ballet director must be informed immediately. It would not hurt to let another parent from your child's level know as well, to communicate to the ballet director or ballet mistress at the time of rehearsal. If it is a corps number, your dancer should take the responsibility to learn any new choreography from a fellow dancer before the next called rehearsal.

One of the unique benefits of participating in the PDT is the community that is gained through this type of group experience. We have always taken very seriously an emphasis on setting good examples of mentorship, generosity, commitment and kindness to others. Parents, please talk to your dancer about these core principles of the group, and clarify their understanding of this commitment, no matter what their age.

Audition and Casting

All dancers must participate in called auditions for each production. Dancers should be dressed in pink tights, a solid leotard, hair neatly in a bun, and appropriate dance shoes. No dancer, who has agreed to the contractual requirements, will be cut from the audition and all audition participants will receive a role in the upcoming production.

When a new ballet is being developed the choreographer is given absolute autonomy in choosing which dancers they would like to cast.

The casting list will be posted within seven days at the studio. Dancers are expected to initial by their role(s) and their name to notify artistic staff that they are aware of their role(s) and the acceptance of such.

Dancers are cast in individual roles by private ballot. There is a panel of judges that all vote their top three choices for each role. It is important to understand that PDT auditions it's dancers for the experience, and to give them an opportunity to present themselves in a different setting other than traditional class. Each dancer should be proud of the roles received and supportive of each other as the cast list is revealed.

If for some reason a dancer cannot participate in the audition due to illness or unforeseen circumstances then they will be evaluated in class. There are no private auditions scheduled.

A dancer may be cast as an understudy. It is important to learn this role as diligently as the primary dancer. There have been many times in the past that a dancer has sustained an injury or has been unable to fulfill their commitment. Understudies are expected to be at all of these rehearsals as well as their primary roles.

Remember, each role is important, from the smallest role to the principal roles, and the process must be consistent. It is a part of every dancers' development to experience many different types of roles. We expect the dancer to respect any and every role they earn. Dancers should not anticipate casting decisions before the cast list is posted.

If you attend the audition, it is understood that you are committed to performing in the production prior to casting decisions. Dancers who would consider dropping out of the production if they do not receive a desired part should not attend the audition.

PDT is committed to providing its audience with the highest caliber productions. Although a dancer may feel they are deserving of a more prominent role, the panel of judges ultimately determines the cast that will best represent the company. It is never in the best interest of any dancer to cast them in a role they are not capable of performing well.

Contract

All dancers and parents will be expected to sign and return the PDT contract (Appendix A & B) no later than the Monday following the audition. The contract is written in good faith between PDT and the membership party(ies). The contract briefly restates policies in this handbook having to do with attendance, grade point average, and participation in company events. The contract serves to reiterate to the dancer the serious level of commitment expected on their part. This is also to give the dancers a “real life” professional experience.

Fees

Participation in each PDT production has an associated membership fee. Membership fees are as follows:

Nutcracker

Levels 1 - 2 \$150.00 (this includes video, all rehearsals and rental of costumes)

Levels 3 - 6 \$200.00 (this includes video, all rehearsals, rental of costumes and discount on Master Class Series)

Spring Production

Levels 1 - 4 \$100.00 (includes video, all rehearsals) plus a \$25 rental fee for each costume.

Levels 5-6 \$200.00 (includes video, all rehearsals) plus a \$25 rental fee for each costume.

The Nutcracker fee is to be paid along with the return of a signed contract. The Spring Production fee is to be paid no later than the first day of Winter/Spring Session.

This fee covers only a small percentage of the costs incurred for these productions. We rely on Fundraising and Contributions to offset the balance of production costs.

Advertising

Word of mouth is our best advertisement. It has played a large role in helping both the school and the company grow. Ticket sales are biggest portion of our income, so please help fill out productions by inviting friends and family.

Tax-deductable corporate and private donations can play a large role in making future productions possible. Please help us continue to grow by spreading the word about our beautiful productions; your guests will not be disappointed. We promise!

Rehearsal Etiquette

All dancers are required to dance full out for every rehearsal unless given express permission from the Rehearsal Director. All dancers must be dressed properly while dancing (no baggy clothes) and have appropriate shoes.

Dancers are to assume the same behavior as they would in class. Whomever is running rehearsal is to be given the same respect that you would the Artistic Director.

No eating is permitted in the studios. The office or stairwell areas may be used to eat in during rehearsals at PDT.

The nook room is reserved for Levels 5 & 6 for study, eating and relaxation.

Attendance Policy

First and foremost each dancer must be attending the minimum amount of class hours that is in accordance with their level. It is imperative to maintain technical abilities, but also to progress. Each dancer is encouraged to take as many classes as possible. Each class is a step closer to reaching your individual dancers' goals. If for some reason a dancer needs to miss their level class in a certain week then they are asked to makeup a lower level class as soon as possible.

Rehearsal attendance is mandatory. The rehearsal schedule will be printed following auditions. Please check the bulletin board at the studio and the website for rehearsal changes. There are no allowed absences unless scheduled in advance.

When any dancer misses rehearsal, no matter what the part, the rehearsal becomes difficult for the artistic staff and other dancers to progress. Frequent absences make it impossible to put a production of this size together.

Be prompt for rehearsal, and ready to dance at the time you are called, shoes on, fully stretched and ready to go at all times. Dancers should be prepared to stay for the entire rehearsal in the room with the artistic director / ballet mistress unless otherwise directed. Yes, we expect a lot but we do not expect any more than what we give.

All of the staff, including the artistic director, choreographers and rehearsal mistresses are donating their time ... please be respectful of their schedules. You are fortunate to have such outstanding professionals giving the company their time and support.

Failure to report to rehearsal or class is cause for immediate dismissal of the cast member. If you are running late you must call the studio and leave a message if no one answers. There are a limited number of weeks to put a production together from scratch; your full cooperation and commitment is expected.

Costumes

All costumes are the property of PDT. Costumes are very costly and labor intensive.

There is no eating or drinking while wearing any of the costumes. Please do not sit on the floor in your costume and try not to excessively touch the costumes.

If you need an alteration or have a problem with your costume please notify the costume mistress right away. No costumes may be taken home unless otherwise stated.

All parts of your costume must be returned at the end of each rehearsal and performance. Dancers who are missing parts of their costume will be charged the cost of the lost article. The expectation is that each dancer is responsible for their own costumes.

Each dancer is responsible to provide their tights and shoes. Tights must be clean and without any holes or runs. Shoes must also be clean and neatly sewn.

Dancers should bring a laundry basket to technical rehearsals that hold all of their make-up, accessories and articles.

It is expected for the dancers ages 12 and up to be completely responsible for their own needs.

Volunteer mothers will be backstage for the younger dancers. If your child has special needs, please notify our costume mistress as soon as possible. It gets very chaotic backstage so we want to be prepared ahead of time for any circumstances that may arise.

No parents are allowed backstage unless they have signed up and been confirmed for a volunteer shift as "backstage parent" No matter how young or small your child. This is to help maintain a calm and productive atmosphere backstage.

Technical Week

Technical week is a tremendously busy and arduous for all involved. Please know what you are about to embark on. If this is your first production please speak with other parents and students to get a clear picture of the madness.

Parents, it is important to understand the nature of technical rehearsals. There is no exact time to give you when your dancer can begin or end. If rehearsals are from 5-9 pm we expect them to stay the whole time. We do our best to stay as close the schedule as possible, but there are always unforeseen circumstances in live theater. The dancing is only a portion of the whole production. Please be patient with changes and delays.

Dancers must remain at all rehearsals until they are excused by the Artistic Director.

It is highly recommended that the dancers get their homework for tech week in advance. Time management with these productions and school is crucial. Dancers should use Friday and Sunday to get ahead each week. Young dancers should speak to the older dancers about their own strategies to stay on top. Part of each dancer's contract is to keep a GPA that is within their potential, and that has been agreed upon with the parents. PDT will not be responsible for failed academics.

Pack enough food for an after school snack and dinner. Please be aware that due to the amount of activity the dancers output they need more calories than the average person and a diet very high in protein.

Parents we appreciate all of your concerns, but technical week is not the time to address concerns regarding your child. It is important to speak to the right person concerning any problems prior to tech week.

Backstage Policies (Technical Week and Days of Production)

Dancers should be backstage fifteen minutes before call, dressed and ready in costume or practice clothes. Lateness causes all company members a great deal of aggravation. Please be on time.

All dancers must remain in their designated dressing area until it is time for them to perform. If you leave the area you will most likely miss your dance or be late for your which affects everyone. Be aware and be ready.

All dancers in Ballet 4, 5 and 6 must participate in company class. This means that they are on stage at the time of call ready for class. No Exceptions.

No one is permitted backstage if they are not a company member or on the working volunteer list. After the performance is the only time that is good for family photos with the sets, but please be brief as clean up begins immediately.

Dancers may not have any other beverage except water while in the theater. Snacks and food may only be eaten in street clothes and in the backstage area. No food in the theater area.

All trash must be thrown away and the backstage area should look the way we found it at the end of each rehearsal/production. Remember we are guests at the venue and the theater can terminate our relationship if we do not respect their space.

Quiet voices only when backstage. Noise travels right into the audience and they can hear the backstage commotion. Only speak if it is absolutely necessary.

It is suggested that dancers bring homework, headsets or a book for downtime.

After each dress rehearsal / performance all parts of your costume(s) must be hung up and returned to the costume mistress. Please be responsible for returning your costume as you received it. With over 100 costumes, it can become very easy to misplace a costume that is not properly returned to the costume mistress.

Artistic Director

The Artistic Director is responsible for the repertory of the company. The Artistic Director conceives, choreographs, and rehearses the majority of all productions. She is responsible for coordinating, creating and overseeing the costuming, scene design, lighting design and production work.

Ballet Mistress

The Ballet Mistress is responsible for coordinating, running and scheduling rehearsals. She makes sure that the dancers are fulfilling their requirements needed to perform. The Ballet Mistress addresses concerns with the dancer's technical abilities and coaches them on how to improve their performance. Any questions regarding rehearsal schedules should be directed to the Ballet Mistress. Additionally, she watches technical week rehearsals and gives dancers corrections on dancing and costuming.

Costume Designer

The Costume Designer is responsible for the conception, creation and design of the costumes.

Personal Effects Manager

The Personal Effects Manager is responsible for making dancers aware of their personal needs before performance. All questions having to do with hair, how to wear a costume, shoes, tights, and make-up can be directed to the Personal Effects Manager. Dancers and parents should direct their questions to her and if she cannot answer your question, she will guide you to the appropriate individual.

Volunteers (Guild of Angels)

PDT is a non-profit organization that relies heavily on its volunteers. There are a great many ways in which you can support PDT as a volunteer.

Volunteer Coordinator, Costume Mistress, Graphic Designer, Website Coordinator, Company Photographer, Level Coordinator, Fundraising or Committee Chairs are all jobs requiring time, attention and dedication.

We always need volunteers for sewing, technical crew, backstage, advertising, concessions, costume fittings, organizing and dressing, clean up, transport of scenery, ushering, ticket sales and many more jobs. Your support is vital to our success. If everyone helps a little then a great deal can be accomplished.

There is a job for everyone you don't have to be creative or have any special talent; sometimes we need just another pair of hands. No matter how small, we appreciate your contribution.

During productions, no parents are allowed backstage unless they are signed up for a volunteer shift as "backstage parent" No matter how young or small your child. This requirement helps to maintain a calm and productive atmosphere backstage.

You are required to attend a Parent Meeting at the start of each season to go over contractual obligations including volunteer requirements. You must take the time to get involved. Volunteer sign up sheets are available at these meetings. They must be returned along with your contract. Please be specific about what you would like to contribute. We have spent many hours coordinating this effort.

Many of our volunteers donate well in excess of the required hours. All are professional people with limited time, but each has a commitment to the success of the Company.

It is important to remember also, that the entire artistic staff is donating time in the conceptual development of original ballets, choreography, rehearsal, costuming and numerous smaller jobs in between. These artists are very dedicated and can do more with their talents when they have your support.

Advertising

PDT advertises each production with posters, postcards, book ads and newspaper ads. Advertising, printing and mailing is very expensive. Our productions are of the highest caliber, dancers should feel very proud and enthusiastic about their participation and want as many people to see them perform as possible. You are our best advertisement. We want to gather momentum, enthusiasm and ticket sales so that the company is able to maintain its amount of performances per year. Everyone must help spread the word!

Ticket Sales

Each family is committed to selling a minimum of Twenty (20) tickets per season.

Outreach Events

PDT does many outreach performances each season. In the past we have done mini performances at the Ronald McDonald House, Retirement and Convalescent Homes, Pre-Schools, and many Community events.

We want to bring our performances to those who would not have the opportunity otherwise to participate. Our dancers are very fortunate to have been given so much; it is their responsibility to share their gifts with those less fortunate.

We ask the dancers to support us in this endeavor with their participation. This a critical element of participation in PDT. Ultimately these dancers will receive the most benefit in giving their audience pleasure.

Not only does PDT want it's dancers to excel in dance & academics, it is important to PDT that they develop as human beings as well. The arts serve to uplift and inspire humanity. We want to instill in our dancers a compassionate & generous human spirit.

If there are any organizations that you are passionate about supporting please let the Artistic Director(s) know. We try to do as many outreach events each year as possible, but we do need lots of advance notice to plan these events.

Financial Sustenance

PDT is always looking for avenues to support its productions. Any parents or friends who work for large corporations that may be interested in funding scholarships, productions or donations please contact a member of the Board of Directors.

We are always looking for experienced grant writers, and anyone who is familiar with sponsorship and fundraising. We are interested in your thoughts, proposals and suggestions.

It is appreciated if you propose an idea in writing or by e-mail, the Artistic staff is busy teaching and running the school during the class hours

Appendix A

Dancer Contract

Senior Company Contract: (Levels 5x & 6) You are committing to a full season of dancing including Nutcracker, Spring Concert, Outreach Events and RDA Festival. You will attend the minimum number of hours of ballet class per week for your level. It is expected you will take your training seriously by spending at least 60 hours in summer study. It is expected that you will attend the RDA Festival. You are required to purchase the company leotards and tights.

Apprentice Company Contract: (Levels 4, 4x & 5) This contract is for younger dancers working towards Senior Company membership. You are committing to participate in shows as needed by the Artistic Staff. You will attend the minimum number of hours of ballet class as appropriate to your level per week and it is highly encouraged you study Jazz and /or Modern. It is expected you will take your training seriously, spend at least forty (40) hours in summer study. It is highly encouraged you attend RDA Festival with the Senior Company. You are required to purchase the company leotards and tights.

Junior Company Contract: This contract is for dancers in levels 1 - 6 who cannot commit to Senior or Apprentice contract but whom would still like to perform you are committing to participate in shows as needed by the Artistic Staff, you will attend the minimum numbers of ballet class as appropriate to your level. If you are in Ballet Levels 3 - 6 you must have completed the specified amount of summer study. It is expected you will take the training seriously.

1. I agree to read and follow the guidelines set within the Philadelphia Dance Theatre Handbook with my parent (if under 19) so that we are all cognizant of the responsibilities and requirements of Company participation.
2. I agree to attend the minimum amount of ballet technique class hours weekly according to my level as stated below and as appropriate to my contract.

Ballet 1 - 1.0 hrs per week

Ballet 4 - 6.0 hrs per week (4x 7.5 hours)

Ballet 2 - 2.0 hrs per week (2x 2.5 hours)

Ballet 5 - 9.0 hrs per week (7.5 Ballet Tech.)

Ballet 3 - 4.5 hours per week (3x 5.5 hours)

Ballet 6 - 9.0 hours per week

3. I agree to attend all rehearsals called, on time warm and prepared to dance. The dancer agrees to attend all rehearsals called for parts they are cast as an understudy. The dancer agrees to not miss more than two rehearsals for each production.
4. I agree to maintain my grades at school at the level agreed with my family.
5. I agree to attend and/or participate in all company group activities in regards to fundraising, outreach and other company group functions.
6. I agree to maintain appropriate conduct on and off the premises of Philadelphia Dance Theatre.
7. I agree to accept all casting decisions.

Dancer & Parent Handbook

- 8. If I am cast as an understudy, I will be at all rehearsals and will know all the choreography for that section of the ballet.
- 9. I will maintain proper etiquette for class and rehearsal.
- 10. I will not use drugs or alcohol.

This contract is written in good faith between the dancer and Philadelphia Dance Theatre. By signing this contract you are agreeing to uphold all the policies stated in the Philadelphia Dance Theatre Handbook as well as the list of agreements above. The policies stated in this contract are binding and any individual who is not abiding this agreement will be immediately excused from Philadelphia Dance Theatre.

I agree to the terms of this contract and I have read and understand PDT's Handbook.

(Check one)

____ Senior Company

____ Apprentice Company

____ Junior Company

Dancer

Date

Parent (if Dancer is under 19 years of age)

Date

Appendix B

Parent Agreement:

1. I agree to commit to a minimum of two hours per production of volunteer service to the company. *(Please complete volunteer sign up sheet).*
2. I agree to participate, as required, in ALL PDT fundraisers.
3. I am aware of my child's commitment and responsibility to the company, class and rehearsal and I am fully prepared to support my child's commitment with attire, event participation and transportation as needed to class and rehearsal as well as all other needs.
4. I agree to take responsibility for the sale of a minimum of twenty (20) tickets per PDT season.

This contract is written in good faith between the dancer and Philadelphia Dance Theatre. By signing this contract you are agreeing to uphold all the policies stated in the Philadelphia Dance Theatre Handbook as well as the list of agreements above. The policies stated in this contract are binding and any individual who is not abiding this agreement will be immediately excused from Philadelphia Dance Theatre.

I agree to the terms of this contract and I have read and understand PDT's Handbook.

Parent

Date