

MINNESOTA DANCE THEATRE
& THE
DANCE
INSTITUTE

Student Handbook

Hennepin Center for the Arts
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Introduction

Nearly five decades ago, Minnesota Dance Theatre began drawing national attention with the beauty, energy and daring aesthetics of Loyce Houlton's work. Today Minnesota Dance Theatre & the Dance Institute offers an environment where dance training and exploration thrive.

MDT/DI is a place where students and professionals work together to share in the goals and accomplishments of this extraordinary art form. Our faculty is dedicated to providing the guidance and experience that shape the performer both technically and artistically – not only to become professional dancers, but to develop the confidence and discipline in pursuing all life goals.

Mission

Our MISSION is to foster talent by providing a comprehensive classical and contemporary training curriculum to the Twin Cities and surrounding area, focused on the technical and artistic demands of a professional dance career.

Students of our school inherit knowledge from our renowned faculty, who nurture each child's potential for artistry and self-confidence. Joy and agility are encouraged through training, mentoring and performing experiences furthering their skills and talents. Central to our purpose is inspiring and challenging students to achieve their best. Students ranging from pre-school to adults take part in classes designed to meet a variety of abilities.

The Dance Institute is the official school of Minnesota Dance Theatre. Founded in 1962 and merged with Ballet Arts Minnesota in 2006 for a collective history of over 50 years, the Dance Institute has achieved national recognition as a leading dance institution in the United States.

History

With a history spanning almost half a century, Minnesota Dance Theatre & the Dance Institute is an acclaimed arts leader in our state, our region and in the nation. In 1962 Loyce Houlton embarked on an artistic journey that would change the Twin Cities' artistic landscape and have a lasting impact on the world of dance. Under her direction, Minnesota Dance Theatre achieved national recognition for its innovative performances and established itself as the flagship dance company in Minnesota. In 1995, Lise Houlton was appointed artistic director, having recently retired from a significant international performing career that included Stuttgart Ballet and American Ballet Theatre. Under Lise's leadership, Minnesota Dance Theatre & the Dance Institute has remained one of Minnesota's cultural treasures with an eclectic international voice performing "*Dance That Dares*".

Since its inception, the organization has insisted upon the partnership of a professional performing company and a dance school – that there would not be one without the other. In September 2006 the School of Minnesota Dance Theatre merged with Ballet Arts Minnesota, founded by Marcia Chapman and Bonnie Mathis, becoming Minnesota Dance Theatre & the Dance Institute (MDT/DI). This merger is a demonstration of a commitment to longevity and sustainability by remaining flexible and adapting to changing environments.

MDT/DI does not discriminate in admissions, employment or student enrollment on the basis of race, creed, sex, disability, national origin, or sexual preference.

Overview of School

YCD – Young Children’s Division: Children explore movement through imagery, music and self-expression and introduced to rhythms, basic steps and terminology. It is a joyful prelude to formal ballet and contemporary training where they learn the fundamentals of both aesthetics. MDT/DI has a satellite program at the Hopkins Center for the Arts for this division.

Placement for YCD is determined by age. This program is for children ages 3 ½ - 7.

PAD – Performing Arts Division: Students are offered a curriculum designed to meet the needs of today’s dancer. MDT/DI offers a sequential curriculum based in the classical Russian tradition and enhanced by contemporary dance forms and ideas. Students will have performance opportunities that encourage and further their skills and talents.

Placement for PAD is determined by the faculty and based on technical ability and strength. New students are required to take a placement class. Students aged 8-18 are eligible for this program.

Placement for Pointe is a decision to be made at the discretion of the faculty only. Appropriate strength and muscular development is necessary for pointe work. Students must be in the PAD Level IV, and attend five lessons per week to be considered for pointe.

PD – Pre-Professional Division: This program focuses on the pre-professional who is working towards a career in dance. With loyalty to national and international dance “industry standards” we expect from each participant their full commitment to both PAD and PD programs. Classes are Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 2:30 – 4:00 pm.

Placement for PD is by invitation only.

CW – Creative Workshop: PAD students in levels 4 through 7/8 have the opportunity to participate in this annual program. Students will learn classical and contemporary repertoire and/or participate in the creation of new work. Students will have performance opportunities through *Up Close & Personal, In-Studio Events* that encourage and further their skills and performance. CW is an optional program and consists of 12 / 2 hours workshops.

Level 4 & 5, Saturday 1:30-3:30 pm

Level 6 & 7/8, Saturday 2:30-4:30 pm

ADT – Adult/Teen Division: Accommodating the business day schedule, the adult/teen open classes offer opportunities to experience dance in its full spectrum, with focus on form, aesthetics and energizing fun. Ballet classes are offered for teen (ages 13 and older) and adult students from all walks of life. Students in this division design their own schedule.

Conditioning: PILATES, is a form of conditioning that balances strength and flexibility using specialized equipment in a one-on-one setting. It is great for all bodies including professionals, parents, athletes, and dancers. One-hour sessions are tailored to your specific body structure to help you reach your goals of health and well-being. The ultimate goal of GYROTONICS is finding one’s optimal physical identity with movements to simultaneously stretch and strengthen the body while increasing range of motion and developing coordination. For more information please visit CONDITIONING on our website, mndance.org.

SP – Summer Programs: MDT/DI offers a variety of classes, which include PAD, Master Classes, Young Children’s Story Ballet, *Loyce Houlton’s Nutcracker Fantasy* Workshop and the August Summer Intensive.

CCDP – City Children’s Dance in the Parks: MDT/DI actively develops new avenues and collaborations of dance education to reach students and audiences of all backgrounds. Through the program CCDP, MDT/DI, in collaboration with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board hope to enrich the life of our community by offering dance classes at Farview Park and Powderhorn Park. This program is designed for students ages 7-9.

Enrollment

Registration

All students, new and returning, must fill out a registration form upon enrollment **each school year**, along with a Release and Indemnification form. All required forms as well as a checklist are available on the website. Early registration is encouraged to hold your spot.

Students and families must read the Student Handbook and sign the Student Commitment Contract and the Family Commitment Contract.

PAD students are expected to commit to the full program.

PAD students must be enrolled for the full program to be considered for participation in *Loyce Houlton's Nutcracker Fantasy* and other Repertory Ensemble activity. **Enrollment in the DI does not guarantee participation in the "Nutcracker".**

Tuition

Fees and tuition are non-refundable and non-transferable once the session has begun.

Tuition for the session must be current on the first day of class. Students will not be able to take class if payment is past due. If you need to work out a payment plan, please contact MDT/DI office; (612) 338-0627 Ext. 6 or info@mndance.org.

Financial Aid/Work Study is available on a limited basis for PAD students in level 4 and above. Financial Aid/Work Study forms are available in the office or on our website, mndance.org. If you have any questions, please contact MDT/DI office, (612) 338-0627 Ext. 6 or info@mndance.org.

CW and PD have an extra annual fee.

Communication

E-mail has become our primary means of disseminating information to parents/guardians and students. An e-newsletter is sent twice monthly, and we will send class schedule changes and conference information via class e-mail lists.

If you do not use e-mail, please let us know the best way to contact you. **Please keep your e-mail addresses updated in the school records to receive the latest news for the school as well as special offers and information on the company.**

Visit our website, mndance.org

Finally, for students and parents/guardians, the student bulletin board outside the office on the 6th floor is a reliable resource for DI information. Please make a point of reviewing it regularly. This is a great way for students to become accustomed to the way in which professional dancers access information.

Communication procedures for "Nutcracker" participants may be different and will be outlined only in the "Nutcracker" handbook.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance

Consistent attendance is critical to consistent progress. **Students are expected to attend every class for which they are scheduled.** It is essential that students arrive on time to class ready to learn and work. **For reasons of physical safety, students who arrive 10 or more minutes late to class may not be allowed to participate but will be expected to observe.** Promptness to all classes and rehearsals is expected.

Please notify the school office of all absences prior to class time. Anticipated absences (school or family conflicts) should be reported in writing at the beginning of the session. Absences due to illness, injury or special circumstances will be excused; however, tuition will not be refunded.

Missed classes can be made up **only during the same session** in a class that is of equal or lower level.

Students with excessive absences may be unable to participate in performances and may be subject to dismissal from the school.

Injuries

MDT/DI is not responsible for injuries sustained during class sessions, rehearsals or performances. We do have a First Aid Kit, including ice packs available if necessary. All students must have a signed Release and Indemnification Form on file at the office with the start of each new school year.

To avoid injury, no hanging on the barres in the studio or running in the hallways.

Observing their classes through an injury can be very beneficial to students. Tuition refunds due to injury are at the discretion of the administration.

Dress Code

Students' appearance in class must be neat and clean at all times. Dancewear is to be kept in good repair and laundered on a regular basis. Students are expected to observe good personal hygiene habits. Students may not be permitted to take class if not in compliance with dress code.

PAD:

Ladies:

- Leotard style and color as specified by level (see leotard order form on website)
- Pink tights
- Bare feet for contemporary class
- No extraneous clothing in class or rehearsal
- No excessive or large jewelry in class or rehearsal
- Hair should be neatly pulled back in a bun and secured

Gentlemen:

- Black tights
- Black or white ballet shoes
- Neat T-shirts fitted and tucked into tights

YCD and ATD:

- Any color leotards and tights (Adults may wear sweatpants or other comfortable clothing that allows freedom of movement)
- Hair should be pulled back and secured
- Ballet shoes for ballet classes, bare feet for contemporary

Code of Conduct

It is the policy of MDT/DI to maintain a positive and healthy as well as productive working environment for all students, staff and dancers. Students of the DI are supported by a dedicated faculty and administration. As part of their training, DI students are expected to behave in a responsible and disciplined manner and to adhere to the school's rules and regulations, both inside the Hennepin Center for the Arts and outside in the greater community as representatives of MDT/DI.

Students are expected to treat MDT/DI staff and company members with respect and to maintain a positive attitude. The DI strives to ensure that all rules are clear and reasonable, and students are expected to observe the established Code of Conduct.

The DI reserves the right to suspend or dismiss any student whose conduct or attitude is found to be unacceptable.

The following are absolutely forbidden at the DI:

- Physical intimidation or injury, verbal harassment
- Theft
- Verbal abuse; lewd; vulgar conduct; profanity
- Sexual harassment or coercion
- Possession of drugs and/or alcohol: Any student found using drugs, or consuming or under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol (including providing drugs or alcohol to another student) will face expulsion
- Smoking
- Firearms or weapons of any kind
- Self-destructive behavior
- Willful destruction or misuse of MDT/DI or another person's property
- To film or photograph in locker rooms, bathrooms OR studios during class or rehearsal
- Inappropriate use of the internet while on the premises
- Internet postings that feature MDT/DI facilities or use of the MDT/DI brand name
- Improper use of cell phones

Any of the above actions will be reported immediately to the leadership of the school who will decide the appropriate disciplinary action. Parents/Guardians will also be notified. Penalties may include (but are not limited to):

- Dismissal from the school
- Suspension from classes
- Loss of performance opportunities

Dressing Room/Studio Etiquette

- **Only water is allowed in dressing rooms and studios.** Snacks may be eaten in tiled hallways but not on carpeted areas.
- Baby powder, lotions, hair products, jet glue or any other substance are not allowed on the dance floor.
- Street shoes are not allowed in the studios.
- **Students are expected to respect the facility and clean up after themselves in the studio and dressing room.** The dressing room is a common area, shared by company dancers, teachers, guests and students. Dressing rooms are for changing clothes and preparing for class only.
- Lockers are available for student use, but please bring your own lock and limit yourself to a single locker out of respect for others.
- MDT/DI is not responsible for lost items. Please leave your valuables at home.

Safety

The safety and well being of our students is a primary concern to the staff of MDT/DI, so we encourage parents/guardians to help us in making the student's experience enjoyable by reviewing safety concerns with your child.

Because some classes are held outside of office hours, **we strongly recommend students be met at the studio**, or be accompanied by an adult when leaving so no one leaves alone. MDT/DI staff IS NOT responsible for students once they leave the classroom/dressing room area.

We recommend that no one travel in the building alone, whether to the bathroom or the lobby, especially YCD students. The faculty is available to help in emergency situations and as needs arise with students, but outside of class time the faculty is not responsible for students. **All students should leave the building within 15 minutes of the completion of their last class for the day.**

MDT/DI is not responsible for lost valuables. Please secure all personal items. Lockers are located in dressing rooms (one locker per student). Purses or wallets should be brought into the studio. Bicycles must be locked outside. Hennepin Center for the Arts hallways are fire escape passages and it is illegal to cause obstruction.

Phones are located in the MDT/DI office and the downstairs lobby of the Hennepin Center for the Arts. In respect of others, please limit calls to two minutes.

Pick up and Drop off Procedures

Due to the impending construction of the Shubert Theater next door to the Hennepin Center for the Arts, pick up/drop off guidelines are in a state of flux. **Please consult the MDT/DI website for the most up-to-date information regarding pick-up/drop-off procedures.**

Emergency Closure

In the case of inclement weather or other unforeseen events, MDT/DI will make an announcement by 2:00 pm on weekdays regarding school closure. The announcement will be on the MDT/DI hotline, (612) 338-0627, ext. 7. Please check the hotline for the most up-to-date information. As a general rule, MDT/DI follows the lead of the Minneapolis Public Schools in canceling classes.

MDT/DI Opportunities

Open House

All families are invited to attend the all-school open house held the Saturday before classes begin in September. At the open house, you will get general information about MDT/DI, as well as specific information about your child's level and class. You will have an opportunity to meet the faculty and company members, purchase tickets for the upcoming season, and tour the facility.

Parent/Guardian Observation and Conferences

Parents/Guardians are invited to watch class on scheduled Parent/Guardian Observation days. This is an opportunity to see the student's progress. Parent/Guardian Observation will take place in the first week of February. In consideration of the students, we ask that you contact the teacher before the class if you would like to observe at any other time.

Conferences will occur in June for all levels. Each student will be assigned a conference time.

Parent/Guardians are expected to participate in conferences. A written progress evaluation will be sent home in January and a final evaluation will be given to Parents/Guardians and Students during the June conference.

Company Performances

One complimentary ticket to MDT performances is available for each student of the DI. Tickets are non-transferable. PAD students are expected to attend company performances, and all families are encouraged to support the company by attending shows!

Strawberry Festival, A Student Showcase

DI students are expected to participate in the *Strawberry Festival, A Student Showcase*, held in mid-May. **Parents/Guardians should be aware that this performance requires extra rehearsals.** Rehearsal information will be sent via e-mail in the months prior to the production. Students must have a positive attendance record in order to perform.

Strawberry Festival, A Student Showcase is an exciting opportunity for students to perform for family and friends as well as the larger community. Admission is charged for performances.

Loyce Houlton's Nutcracker Fantasy

Loyce Houlton's Nutcracker Fantasy is a professional production of MDT. Children's roles in the performance are filled by students of the DI, but **enrollment in the DI does not guarantee participation in the "Nutcracker"**. Participating students must be available to attend all rehearsals and costume fittings for which they are called, and to perform in all of the "Nutcracker" performances to which they are assigned. If you do not wish your child to be considered for the "Nutcracker", please indicate that on your registration form. Students in Levels 2 and up are eligible for consideration. **Casting decisions are made at the discretion of the Artistic Director**, in collaboration with the faculty of the DI. Auditions are not held, but students are observed extensively in class. Casting decisions are made with considerable thought and care, but are **not** an indication of future professional potential. They are based on myriad factors, among them technical ability, height, musicality but also including the size and number of specific costumes. **Students participating in the "Nutcracker" should be fully committed to participation regardless of eventual role decisions.**

Please refer to the STUDENT HANDBOOK section, under the SCHOOL drop-down menu of the website for more information about the "Nutcracker", including a list of FAQs (frequently asked questions). Participating students will receive a Nutcracker Handbook at an informational meeting mid-October, and will also be expected to sign an "Intent to Perform" agreement.

Creative Workshop

Students participating in the CW will present *Up Close & Personal, In Studio Events* performances throughout the year.

Other

Occasionally, upper level students will be selected to perform with MDT productions at the discretion of the artistic staff.

Parent/Guardian Involvement

TEN ways that parents/guardians can to be involved in the education of their child enrolled at Minnesota Dance Theatre & the Dance Institute:

1. Buy season tickets to MDT performances. These are wonderful gifts for birthdays, holidays, etc. and help to build a sense of community. Being exposed to MDT's performances is an important part of your child's dance education. All PAD students receive one complimentary ticket to each MDT production in support of their dance education, and to encourage and enable all families to attend.
2. Encourage your child to read age appropriate biographies of dancers and about the history of dance. There is an extensive library available to borrow for the students in the office.
3. Expose your child to musical training through the study of music in their schools, singing in a chorus, playing a musical instrument, and listening to all musical styles.
4. Allow your child to attend master classes given by dance teachers when the opportunity presents itself.
5. Become aware of good eating habits and nutrition.
6. Observe the practice of good body conditioning and flexibility to avoid dance injuries. Encourage stretching and exercises that benefit aerobic conditioning, i.e. swimming, biking, jumping rope, pilates training.
7. Be aware that involvement in other sport activities can be fine if the schedule permits. Make sure it is a 'good marriage' with ballet.
8. Remind your child to get plenty of sleep, especially after the extreme rigors of ballet class activities.
9. Allow your child to follow their heart, talents, and interests.
10. Remember that MDT/DI wants to train and develop your child to the highest caliber while nurturing the individual to become a creative artist.

Volunteering

Volunteers play a key role at MDT/DI, providing our dancers with valuable services and contributions. We encourage parents/guardians to be involved in the high quality of dance education and performing experiences for your students and offer a variety of volunteering opportunities requiring a range of skills, interests, and schedules.

The Volunteer Form is available in the MDT/DI office and in the school section of the website. This form is use to identify parents/guardians who are interested in being contacted for volunteering and allow them to specify the areas in which they would prefer to be involved.

Please contact MDT/DI for more information, (612) 338-0627 or info@mndance.org

Financial support

Class provides the young dancer with the fundamental practices and skills to step onto the stage, where every young dancer faces the moment of truth. It is being in the presence of working dancers that provides the understanding of the discipline and the insight to the art to strengthen their ability to take that first step in the spotlight. We believe that the presence of members of the company in the studios inspires the novice dancer to struggle to achieve discipline and poise that prepares them for their own future in dance.

On occasion the talented need financial support beyond what their homes may provide.

We hope your investment in your child's talent and dreams can extend to others who can lift the spirit of the class to greater heights in dance.

We are proud that we earn two-thirds of our budget. It is the generosity of supporters that allows us to stretch ourselves to greater heights. Please consider making a tax deductible gift today. Contact **Connie Fullmer** at **(612) 338-0627 ext. 3** or **connie.fullmer@mndance.org** to arrange to make a gift.

www.mndance.org
