



## Ballet & Pointe Program

Dear Parents and Dancers:

This handout outlines the philosophy of ballet practiced at MarLo Dance Studio.

MDS maintains a healthy perspective on dance. We do not yell, belittle, or punish as some reality television shows portray. Our staff work hard to provide the highest quality training. We also create unique opportunities to our locale including: professional level productions, guest teachers, a variety of fieldtrips and more. It is our goal to create an atmosphere that is warm and nurturing while maintaining a quality of work ethic and self-discipline. Our students are asked to honor their training, their teachers and their fellow students.

MarLo Dance Studio uses *The Perfect Pointe System*. I, Miss Maria studied directly under dance physiotherapist and author, Lisa Howell, at the 2009 Northwest Dance Intensive. I found Miss Howell, the researcher and creator of *The Perfect Pointe System*, to be brilliantly logical and enlightening. The system not only equips our staff with greater understanding of the unique individuality of the human body as it relates to ballet, but also an additional syllabus of exercises and “tricks” to see our girls improve their general technique, preparation for pointe, and existing pointe work. The student bears a responsibility to do her at home exercises, developing and maintaining both strength and flexibility in core stability, turnout, and foot strength.

**Pre-Pointe Students:** Who is a pre-pointe student? Any girl in ballet is being prepared for pointe from her earliest ballet training. More in depth preparation in the beginning ballet level and intensively during the intermediate I level. Some Intermediate I students will move into pointe work. What steps do I need to make to be accepted for pointe?

- Faithfully attend your regular weekday classes and be attending 1 full year of Ballet Acceleration before taking your pointe evaluation exam. Make up any missed classes.

- Intermediate I students: You will be lent a copy of the *Perfect Pointe Book* student manual to work through. The system will be used in class. Your teacher will be checking your workbooks monthly.
- You must pass a comprehensive evaluation given by Miss Maria. Pre-tests will be given in the Intermediate I class. When your teacher feels you are close, she will refer you for a pointe evaluation exam.
- Is everyone made for Pointe? No, some hereditary bone structures may make pointe work impossible. Pointe is not the end-all-be-all of a dancer's options. Classical ballet training is the foundation for jazz, lyrical, and modern dance and in these areas the dancer can excel to the highest of levels without ever wearing a pair of pointe shoes. She can also continue to do exciting ballet work in the technique shoe.

**Existing Pointe Students:** Getting en pointe and staying en pointe are two separate things. You already know the rigors of the art. You are all unique, beautiful, dedicated dancers who have much yet to attain.

- Twice weekly ballet class plus Acceleration is required to be en pointe. The 2 hour Accel class meets twice monthly. If you must miss acceleration, you will be required to make up the class time before resuming pointe work. Ask your director which classes you may qualify to take as make-up. Making up accel and weekday classes is in the best interest of the dancer pointe strength and therefore, prevention of injury. Excessive absences will require a parent conference.
- Dancers may be individually given specific stretches and strengthening exercises to do at home and before class that I guarantee will improve their overall technique and make their pointe work easier.
- Want to see improvement? Rest, Nutrition, Warming up (seriously now) before class, & Giving class a 100% all the way through the Reverence. Ask about taking a 3<sup>rd</sup> weekday class.
- What if I have an injury? Talk to your ballet director. Sitting in on a class has value and keeps you up to speed on combinations. Take notes. Often times an individual student can be given parts of the class or adjusted exercises that won't affect the injury as it heals. Professional medical attention may be advised before the studio will allow the student to take full class.



**About Summer Classes:** They are required for all pointe students. Pointe work involves unique deep muscle development. When those muscles are not being trained and used for ballet, over the 3 ½ month break, they lose strength and flexibility. On the flipside, I continue year after year to observe phenomenal technical and artistic growth from our summer students, sometimes seeing students jump entire level.

- Summer Intensives: There are summer intensives all over the country, many hosted by major professional dance companies. Auditions for the super elite start in January. Smaller intensives in Eugene & Portland will have auditions through the spring. MarLo closes during the month of July. We encourage dancers to select intensives offered during that month.

We acknowledge that some family's summer schedules may partially limit a dancer from some of MDS summer classes

- If you are traveling, look for towns that have studios offering ballet classes. This can be a very fun and enlightening experience. Keep your director in the loop of your plans.
- Dancers and parents, please have a realistic understanding of what missing summer training will mean for the dancers progress.
  - Pre-Pointe: Will the dancer eventually progress onto pointe? Yes, they certainly can, however, it will take an extra year or two longer simply because we have to rebuild.
  - Pointe: The dancer with a 3 ½ -month break must go back through 1<sup>st</sup> year pointe work to safely re-condition the feet and ankles. Inevitably, some of her classmates who didn't break will jump a level ahead; this can be a bit discouraging. Don't give up! Follow the advice stated above and dance because you love it.

Parents and dancers, I thank you for the honor of entrusting the sound training of your daughters and sons to MarLo Dance Studio. It is an honor that all MarLo staff take seriously. Our goal is to provide the best well-rounded dance education on the south coast. If you have any further questions, don't hesitate to call or email.

Sincerely,

*Maria Merriam-Director*

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