

Northampton School of Dance

From A Dancer's View

NSD Important Info

- We will be holding classes on Tuesday, November 11th, but the studio will be closed Wednesday, November 26th through Saturday, November 29th for Thanksgiving break.
- Congrats to all of NSD's students who auditioned for the PVB and Moscow Nutcrackers. We can't wait to see you all perform!
- November tuition is due by Saturday, November 8th. A \$10.00 late fee will apply if tuition is not paid by this time.



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Holiday Party

We will be having our fourth annual NSD holiday party on / Friday, December 19th at 6pm. The party will be held at the JFK Middle School in Northampton.

The admittance to the party is free to all NSD students and children ages 12 and under. All other attendees will be charged \$10 for admittance.

We are still working on which classes will be performing at the show. Once we have decided, we will post a line up at the studio.

We will be decorating the students with garland, but each teacher may request their class to wear a particular color. We will be notifying the students and parents as soon as we decide.

As for food, we will be asking for donations. If you plan to bring something, please sign up at the front desk. We will place a sign up sheet with Carleen at the beginning of December, for those of you who are interested in helping out. Please write down your name and the food item that you would like to bring to the party. Same applies for beverages. If you would like to donate some money to put towards buying food or drinks, please write this down on the list as well.

In addition to the performance and the meal, we will also be having a raffle. We will be accepting donations from anyone who would like to offer something. Please bring in any donations you have to Carleen at the front desk.

There will also be a 50/50 raffle drawing. Good luck in advance to all of you who participate and thank you to all of you who bring in donations.

Our favorite dj, Dana Collins, will be assisting us by playing our music for the performance. After the show and the raffles, Dana will be playing some more music for everyone to dance to. It is going to be a great time!

If your student is not performing in the holiday party, please still come to have some fun with us. The holiday party is open to all NSD students and their families. We hope to see you there!

Balancing Act

By Abigail Fasminsky and Julie Peacock

Taken from the September 2008 edition of "Dance Spirit" magazine.

September usually means one thing: Back to school! Say goodbye to summer and hello to new teachers, classes and classmates. It can all be a little discombobulating (who ever said transitions were easy?). Yoga is here to help. This series of Sun Salutations and balancing poses can help you get your grounding in this transitional time.

Exercise # 1:

Sun Salutations are a luscious way to wake up the spine, connect to your breath and ground yourself before class or an audition. They incorporate poses that generate strength, flexibility and stamina. Repeat this sequence as many times as feels good, and move at your own pace.

1. Begin with the legs together in *Tadasana*, or mountain pose.

TIPS:

- a. Neck is long.
- b. Palms press together gently.
- c. Belly is engaged.
- d. Feet are parallel. Toes are spread and all four corners of the feet are connected to the floor.

2. Inhale and reach arms up; press the palms and look up at fingertips in *Urdhva Hastasana*.

TIPS:

- a. Back of the neck stays long.
- b. Don't let your shoulders crawl up to your ears.
- c. Knit ribs together.
- d. Belly is engaged.
- e. Tailbone reaches to the heels.
- f. Reach thigh bones back, but don't lock knees

3. Exhale and fold forward over your legs into standing forward bend, or *Uttanasana*.

TIPS

- a. Relax head.
- b. Fingertips in line with toes.
- c. Weight is equally distributed between toes and heels.

4. Inhale and extend the chest forward into **flat back**.

TIPS:

- a. Back of neck is long.
- b. Widen collarbones across chest.
- c. Belly is engaged.

EXTRA TIP: If you can't touch the floor without curving your spine, place your hands on your shins or thighs.

5. Exhale and fold back into **Uttanasana**.

6. Inhale, bend your knees and come up to chair pose, or *Utkatasana*. Press hands together, or reach them overhead.

TIPS:

- a. Keep head in line with spine.
- b. Maintain natural curve of spine.
- c. Engage belly.
- d. Bend your knees as much as you can while still keeping heels down.

7. Exhale and return to *Tadasana*.

Exercise # 2:

Balancing Poses: Balancing poses are challenging! At some point, all of you will fall out of them. They serve as great reminders to not be too serious or tough on yourselves. They also help you steady your body and mind when things feel like they're shifting.

1. Tree pose, or *Vrksana*. The left foot rests on the inside of the right thigh, NOT the knee joint. You can also place the foot on the right inner shin.

TIP:

- a. Press the foot and the thigh into each other. (The pinky toe should connect to the leg, too!)

2. *Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana I* (*Hasta* means hand, *padangustha* means big toe.) Wrap the first two fingers of the left hand around the big toe (pinky finger is down).

TIPS:

- a. Draw the left shoulder back so the two sides of the chest are even.
- b. Drop the left hip and pull the thigh back so the two hips (and two sides of the butt) are in line.
- c. The standing leg stays straight!

EXTRA TIP: If you can't extend your top leg without curving the spine or hiking the hip up, bend the TOP leg slightly, while keeping the spine long and lifted.

3. Extend the left leg out to the side into *Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana II*. Lift the whole body up and breathe evenly.

TIPS:

- a. Outwardly rotate the left thigh and drop the sitting bone.
- b. Flex the foot.
- c. Draw the left shoulder back so both shoulder blades are on the back.

REMINDER: The standing leg MUST stay straight. If you want to modify the pose, bend the extended leg.

Switch legs and repeat.

Exercise # 3:

SQUATTING:

This pose is great for grounding the body and focusing the mind. It also opens the hips, brings circulation to the pelvis and releases the lower back.

TIPS:

- a. Press hands together.
- b. Press elbows into inner thighs so the knees don't fall in.
- c. Outwardly rotate thighs.
- d. The four corners of the feet are grounded and ankles are lifted. Don't let the arches fall in!

EXTRA TIP: If you can't lower your hips while keeping the feet flat on the floor, place a blanket under your heels.

Foot Woes—How to Avoid Them

Take good care of your feet now to avoid long-term pain.

By Jennifer Brewer, MSED

Taken from the October/November 2008 edition of "Pointe Magazine"

Ballet dancers' feet do far more than the job for which they were designed, so it's hardly surprising that foot injuries are prevalent. Some are sudden, like sprains and tears, but others take years to build, so a dancer may not experience significant pain until mid-career or later. With all the stress our feet endure, is there any way to minimize the possibility of long-term injury?

In fact, footwear and training choices can significantly minimize the risks. "I know a number of dancers in their 40s and 50s who have been on pointe their whole lives and are not debilitated by chronic injury," says Joseph Levinson, a ballet teacher and Pilates therapies at the Center for Sports Medicine at Saint Francis Memorial Hospital in San Francisco.

While choice of flooring may not be an option for many students and professionals, the first step toward avoiding injury is training and performing on a floor designed for dancing. Harder, less giving surfaces can accelerate the development of tendonitis, stress fractures, plantar fasciitis and sesamoiditis (painful damage to the tiny bones beneath the big toe). Dancers who must work on harder surfaces should look for shoes that have cushioning in the sole, and pay extra attention to stretching the feet and legs before and after class, to partially counteract the effects of the floor.

When it comes to the feet, "body placement is a major part of prevention," says Charthel Aruthur, a Joffrey Ballet teacher, ballet master and former dancer. With strength and lift in the back, pelvis and abdominals, dancer are better able to control foot placement and weight distribution.

Forcing turnout causes the feet to roll inward, putting stress on the big toe and exacerbating bunions, warns Levinson. "The stress level on bones isn't distributed

evenly," which creates an elevated risk for other injuries as well.

Waiting until the feet and body are ready before starting pointe, plus choosing the right shoes, can get a dancer's feet off to a healthy start. William Heinz, MD, in Portland, ME, has worked with Indianapolis Ballet and currently treats the professionals and students at Portland Ballet Company. Heinz evaluates each Portland Ballet student before she goes on pointe, and believes that a proper fit is a key factor in avoiding injuries.

"You've got to take the time to find a shoe that conforms to the foot and holds it," he says. Injuries that result from improperly fitting shoes run "the whole gamut," he says. "Blisters tend to be first to occur, and corns and calluses, but then injuries progress to structural damage such as stress fractures."

Dancing exclusively in pointe shoes, no matter how well they fit, is taxing. "When you're not doing pointe work, you should be in ballet slippers so you are working all your muscles," says Heinz. He explains that bones, muscles and tendons make adaptive changes to accommodate both demi-pointe and pointe work. Wearing pointe shoes all the time can cause the loss of some of those strength gains.

Dancers who are expected to wear pointe shoes at all times should compensate with exercises that build strength and flexibility in the intrinsic muscles (smaller muscles in the foot that may be inhibited during pointe work). Strong intrinsics help distribute the impact of landing from a jump and give better control on pointe.

For strengthening intrinsic muscles, Arthur suggests simple exercises such as picking up pencils with the toes, as well as articulating every part of the foot when doing tendus, using the toes in frappe and stress-

ing demi-pointe on the way up and on the way down in relevés and jumps, whether in pointe shoes or slippers.

Street shoes are another consideration. "Choose a supportive arch that fits your foot, with natural materials to keep the feet healthy, a slight heel and a flexible sole," advises Arthur. Supportive running shoes are a good choice, as they reduce the likelihood of rolling in. With the comfort and support of good street shoes, the feet are more rested and ready when it's time for class, Arthur adds. It may be tempting to choose street shoes according to fashion only, but protecting the feet is a better long-term investment.

Are Bunions Inevitable?

Although many dancers consider painful and disfiguring bunions an inevitable by-product of pointe work, their appearance and severity are affected by both genetics and training. According to William Heinz, MD, bunions result from a loosening and collapse of ligaments in the arch. The tendency to develop bunions is largely inherited, he says, but wearing shoes with arch support can inhibit this development.

Regardless of the genetic component, dancers typically develop bunions at an earlier age than the general population. Pilates therapist Joseph Levinson believes that ill-fitting shoes and rolling the feet inward are both likely to increase bunion severity. He also notes that it is possible to reverse or reduce bunions through exercise. Try teacher Charthel Arthur's exercise to slow down bunion development: Sit on a chair, bend over and use your hands to straighten your big toe. Lift the heel to demi-pointe and down again with that foot, putting pressure on the floor and holding your toe in place. Repeat eight times with each foot.

NSD Office Hours

Northampton School of Dance
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Phone: (413) 582-7099
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Mondays: 3:30—7:30pm
Tuesdays and Thursdays: 4:30—7:30 pm
Wednesdays: 4:00—7:15 pm
Saturdays: 8:00—2:30pm



Carleen Bigelow is our administrative assistant. She will be working the desk during these hours.

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Check us out on the Web!
www.northamptondance.com

November Vacation

Classes **will** be held on Tuesday, November 11th. However, NSD is taking a Thanksgiving break from Wednesday, November 26th through Saturday, November 29th. There will be **no classes** held during these four days. Please mark this on your calendars. Also, there will not be an observation week this month but there will be one in December. Thank you and enjoy your break!

Nutcracker News

We would like to inform you about some Nutcracker News. First, there are quite a few students that have been selected to be in a performance of, The Nutcracker. Pioneer Valley Ballet, Academy of Ballet Arts & Moscow Ballet Company are all putting on shows this year and we are very proud of our students that are participating. Congratulations to all of you!

Secondly, Jen is the local dance coordinator for the Moscow Ballet's Great Russian Nutcracker. The performance will be held at the Springfield Symphony Hall on Friday, November 21st at 7:30 pm. Tickets can be purchased either through www.nutcracker.com

or from NSD. The tickets purchased through NSD are at a discounted rate and all orders must be in by **Monday, November 10th!**

Lastly, Jen is also the Rehearsal Mistress for the Academy of Ballet Arts' performance of, The Nutcracker. There will be two performances on Saturday, December 20th. We will keep you posted regarding the times and the cost of the tickets. Our very own Emma Almanzar, Marisa Babb, Alyssa Woodward and even Jen Peterson will be in the production. Come check it out!

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