



2018-2019 Handbook

Artistic Director, Melissa Zervas Hahne

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www.southwestballettheatre.org



profile

Southwest Ballet Theatre is a 501c3 non-profit organization that is bringing high quality, professional performances to the community at an affordable price. By attaining federal grants and the broader community's monetary support, SWBT does not require each participant to pay significant theatre, costume or other fees associated with a production. The company is an arm of The School of Southwest Ballet Theatre whose purpose is to train dancers in the discipline of classical ballet and other forms of dance.

mission

To enrich, inspire, and uplift lives through classical ballet and dance education and performance.

values

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

Quality training by dedicated active and former professional teachers 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 SWBT.

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

repertoire

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

Our **Winter performance** is Daniel Baudendistel's version of the popular classic *The Nutcracker*. SW BT strives to continue this holiday tradition each winter.

In February, SWBT classes will showcase what they are learning in class (i.e., modern, tap, jazz, ballet, lyrical) on the EMCC stage.



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SWBT's **Spring performance** *Coppélia* will be set by prima ballerina, Soili Arvola.

membership policies

All dancers who have auditioned for and accepted company membership must follow SWBT's policies. SWBT is committed to providing excellent productions for the community and its' 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.

SWBT uses Google Calendar to organize its rehearsal schedule, which can be found on the calendar page of southwestballettheatre.org. This calendar is exclusively for posting rehearsal times, not class times. Each parent is responsible—not the student—for knowing the rehearsal schedule. This is important for our rehearsals but also pick up times as well. If any student is left for more than 15 minutes without a ride, a \$30 fee will be assessed. Our staff, as well as the staff at Crossfit Fury, would be held responsible to stay with your child to maintain safety as well as to lock up the studio.

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 at the start of the season. If an absence is sudden, due to illness, the artistic advisor or artistic director must be informed immediately. If it is a corps piece, your dancer should take the responsibility to learn any new



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choreography from a fellow dancer before the next called rehearsal. No more than 2 absences will be allowed. If dancers are absent without prior notice they will be fined \$25.00. For example, a text the day of rehearsal that you have a mandatory function or your family is on vacation is unacceptable. Write absences that are a family or school commitment on your contract.

procedure for absences/lateness

1. If you are sick or there is an emergency call and e-mail to inform immediately.
2. Write each absence anticipated on your contract prior to the audition. Only 2 are permitted.
3. If you are absent without sufficient notice (it is not written on contract) you will be fined \$25.00.

One of the unique benefits of participating in SWBT is the community that is gained through this type of group experience. SWBT places 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.

auditions 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.

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, so understudies are expected to be at all of these rehearsals as well as rehearsals for their primary roles.



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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 dancer's 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. Some years dancers may repeat the same role - this should not be taken as an insult, but as an opportunity to perform the role with more maturity and confidence. Think of the life of a professional who performs the same roles hundreds of times night after night. Repetition is good!

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.

SWBT 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 or choreographer 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 SWBT contract (Appendix A & B) before or on the day of the audition. The contract is written in good faith between SWBT 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 SWBT production has an associated membership fee. Membership fees are as follows:

Nutcracker Fee (*due September 8*): Pre-Ballet: \$65.00 / Ballet Levels 1-6: \$100

Coppelia Fee (*due January 12*): Pre-Ballet: \$65.00 / Ballet Levels 1-6: \$100

A contract must be signed for every performance as well as the fee paid. This fee does not cover the cost



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of our instructors running the show. The monthly tuition will still be charged. This fee covers broader theater fees such as the venue, make up, costumes, choreographer, etc.

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.

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 in ballet uniform while dancing (no baggy clothes) and have appropriate shoes.

Dancers are to assume the same behavior as they would in class. Please refer to the Ballet Etiquette page on SWBT's website at <http://southwestballettheatre.org/school/class-etiquette/>.

No cell phones or media are permitted in the studio during rehearsals or class. If used, cell phones will be confiscated until the end of rehearsal.

attendance policy

First and foremost each dancer must attend the minimum amount of class hours that is in accordance with their level. This 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 dancer's goals. If for some reason a dancer needs to miss their level class in a particular week they are asked to makeup a 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.



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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.

All of the staff, including the artistic director, choreographers and rehearsal mistresses are donating some, if not all of 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 artistic director at 623-385-6681 and leave a message.

costumes

All costumes are the property of SWBT. 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 in the theater. You will most likely be sharing your costume with other cast members, so treat the costume with respect and make sure the next dancer has all of its parts.

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, ac-



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cessories and articles.

It is expected for 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.

technical week

Parents, it is important to understand the nature of technical rehearsals. For Levels 1-6, there is no exact time to give you when your dancer will 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 to 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 the artistic director or artistic advisor excuses them.

It is highly recommended that the dancers receive 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 of their workload. 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. SWBT is not 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 polices (technical week and days of production)



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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 which affects everyone. Be aware and be ready.

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

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. Each dancer will be responsible to sign out and sign in each costume.

supporting SWBT

SWBT is non-profit organization. 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 the biggest portion of our income, so please help fill up productions by inviting friends and family. The more tickets sold the less the expenses for the theater, lighting designer, technical crew, costumes and contracted professional dancers. Please see if your company provides matching gifts.



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Help us continue to grow by spreading the word about our beautiful productions. We promise your guests will not be disappointed!

outreach events

We are developing our outreach events. As volunteers, we depend on you to make SWBT present in the community. Our mission is to affect the lives of our community through this beautiful art. If you have ideas about how to reach our community, please discuss with our Artistic Director.

financial sustenance

SWBT is always looking for new 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 Board of Directors President Liz Douglass at douglassliz@aol.com

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.



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appendix A

Dancer Contract

As an **SWBT Dancer**:

1. I agree to **read and follow the guidelines** set within the Southwest Ballet Theatre Handbook with my parent (if under 19) so that we are all cognizant of the responsibilities and requirements of Company participation.

Initials _____

2. I agree to **attend the minimum amount of ballet technique class hours weekly** according to my level and as appropriate to my contract.

If from another studio, I must show proof of taking a minimum amount of classes per week signed by the artistic director and must enroll in one technique class per week at SWBT.

Initials _____

3. I agree to **attend all rehearsals called**, on time warm and prepared to dance. I agree to **not miss more than two rehearsals for each production**. I agree to notify in writing all known obligations that will prohibit me from attending rehearsals. **Failure to notify in advance will result in a \$25 fine.**

Initials _____

4. I agree to **maintain my grades at school** at the level agreed with my family.

Initials _____

5. I agree to attend and/or participate in all company group activities in regards to fundraising, outreach, and other company group functions.

Initials _____



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6. I agree to maintain appropriate conduct on and off the premises of Southwest Ballet Theatre.

Initials _____

7. I agree to **accept all** casting decisions.

Initials _____

8. I will maintain proper etiquette for class and rehearsal.

Initials _____

9. I will not use drugs or alcohol.

Initials _____

10. I understand **that no cell phones or media are permitted in the studio** during rehearsals or class. If used, cell phones will be confiscated until the end of rehearsal.

Initials _____

This contract is written in good faith between the dancer and Southwest Ballet Theatre. By signing this contract you agree to uphold all the policies stated in the Southwest Ballet 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 Southwest Ballet Theatre.

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

Dancer

Date

Parent (if Dancer is under 19 years of age)

Date



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appendix B

Parent Agreement

1. I agree to commit to a minimum of two hours per production of volunteer service to the company.

Initials _____

2. 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.

Initials _____

3. I am aware that a \$30 charge will be made if a staff/faculty member is left supervising a dancer due to late pick up.

Initials _____

This contract is written in good faith between the parent and Southwest Ballet Theatre. By signing this contract you are agreeing to uphold all the policies stated in the Southwest Ballet 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 Southwest Ballet Theatre.

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

Parent _____ **Date** _____





appendix B

Parent Volunteer Sign-Up

Southwest Ballet Theatre is dependent upon parent volunteers. While the artistic faculty is working to set choreography, technique and staging, parents will be busy. This load is not burdensome if every parent unit commits to 2 hours per production. There are many ways to help, even from your home.

In addition to volunteering for two hours per production, each parent unit will be responsible for participating in any fundraiser we might hold. As a non-profit entity, we depend on donations and grants in order to afford such costly productions. There are many ways to participate, not just in attendance.

These volunteer hours are non-negotiable. The artistic director keeps track of each family's participation. If these criteria are not met, the student will be dismissed from the SWBT performing company. As part of your contractual agreement, please understand that your involvement as a parent volunteer is crucial to the vitality of Southwest Ballet Theatre.

Please initial where you think you will be able to volunteer for each category below:

The Nutcracker

_____ Costume Fitting (Helping fit costumes on costume fitting day. Please indicate if you have sewing skills)

_____ Costume alterations (Altering existing costumes)

_____ SugarPlum Shoppe, headed by Elizabeth Seufert (Pricing, decorating, and manning table during performances)

_____ Ticket Counter (Selling tickets at door and assisting with will call tickets)



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_____ Backstage hands (Helping pull props off stage, getting dancers ready with cues, keeping dancers quiet, helping with quick changes)

_____ Dressing Room (Helping dancers in dressing rooms get dressed, make up applied, and assisting with quick changes, escorting dancers through hallways)

_____ Ushers (Greeting patrons and handing out programs at event)



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