

Parent and Student Handbook 2021-2022

All the information you need for a rewarding and joyful dance experience.

BARRISKILL

dance theatre school

WELCOME TO BARRISKILL DANCE THEATRE SCHOOL!

This handbook will serve as your guide to Barriskill Dance Theatre School (BDTS) and our philosophy of dance education. We take our role as mentors and teachers in your child's life very seriously, and appreciate that you have entrusted them to us. It is our objective to inspire a passion for the art of dance in every child who passes through our doors.

Please read the information in this handbook carefully. We hold all of our parents and students responsible for the information within.

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CONTACT INFORMATION:

Executive and Artistic Director: Mari O'Donnell
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OUR PHILOSOPHY:

BDTS is committed to providing high-quality, developmentally appropriate dance and theatre education. We provide a safe and child-centered environment in which our students can explore dance with qualified, nurturing teachers.

Dance education encompasses so much more than the dance technique we teach your children. We believe the discipline of dance training gives young people a better understanding of commitment, the spirit of teamwork, and discovering what they can accomplish through hard work. Our goal is to give dancers the tools and knowledge/education to become dancers in the professional world if that is desired. Even more importantly, we strive to educate the minds, bodies, and souls of our students; teaching them the skills needed for a successful life, and a valuable appreciation for the performing arts.

Our approach to dance education is aimed at helping our students find the intrinsic rewards of learning to dance rather than just the external rewards so commonly strived for. Even as we prepare for performances, our emphasis is on the process; the satisfaction of working hard together to create a finished production we share with family and friends.

We truly believe that by participating in challenging, developmentally appropriate dance classes in a nurturing environment, all children and adults can experience the sense of accomplishment and joy that comes with learning to dance.

The joy is in the journey! We look forward to taking this journey with you and your family.

COMMUNICATION:

Communication is key to maintaining smooth and effective studio operations. BDTS has several means of communication to keep all of our students and parents well-informed.

- Our website, barriskilldance.com, is a great resource for studio information. Policies, schedules, and much more are posted on our website. If you have a question, it is likely you will find the answer on our website.
- Email is our primary way of communicating with families. Please make sure that the studio has your most up-to-date email address, and be sure to read the communications we send out. We do our best to limit our email communications to important information, and it is imperative that you read all emails you receive from the studio. These emails will contain important information about fees and deadlines and upcoming events. If you are not receiving regular emails from us, please let us know immediately so we can figure out what is going on. You can email contact@barriskilldance.com with any questions.

HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES:

During the 2021-2022 season, we will continue to follow the guidance of the CDC and the NC Health Department. We anticipate this advice will change throughout the year, and we will adapt with it to ensure a safe and healthy environment for everyone at Barriskill.

At this time limited class sizes, face coverings, and hand sanitization procedures will remain in effect.

CALENDAR:

The calendar for the current year is available below. Please make sure you are aware of school vacations and other important dates.

Occasionally we are forced to make changes to the calendar. These changes will be posted on the website and sent out by email.

2021-2022

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

BDTS Classes Start	Sat. Aug 21, 2021
Company Audition	Sat. August 28, 2021
Fall Musical Audition	Tue, August 31, 2021, 5:30-7:30 PM
Labor Day Weekend - CLOSED	Sat, Sept 4-6, 2021
Nutcracker Auditions	Sat, Sep 11, 2021
Observation Week (Pre-School Classes Recital commitment sheet due)	Nov 15-20, 2021
Thanksgiving Break - CLOSED	Nov 22 -Nov 28, 2021
Nutcracker Tea Party	December 5, 2021
Nutcracker Performances	Dec 17, 18 and 19, 2021
Fall Musical Performances	Dec 18 and 19, 2021
Winter Break - CLOSED	Dec 20 thru Jan 4, 2022
Classes Resume	Jan 5, 2022
Spring Musical Audition	Tue, January 11, 2021, 5:30-7:30 PM
MLK Holiday - CLOSED	Jan 17, 2022
Spring Break - CLOSED	March 28 - April 3, 2022
Classes Resume	April 4, 2022
BDTS Studio Company Performance	TBD

Story Ballet (Ballet levels 1-8)	TBD
Spring Musical	TBD
Spring Recitals	TBD
Last Day of Classes	Saturday, May 28th

CHOOSING CLASSES:

We strive to provide classes that serve children and adults with a wide range of abilities, experience, and reasons for taking a dance class. First and foremost, we encourage you to talk with your child about his or her interests and goals. Consult our class list for age and experience guidelines for each of our classes.

If you are new to the studio, we recommend that you talk with us directly about placement in our classes. Please remember that each dance studio is different, and our class levels and curriculum may be different from your previous studio. We will work with you to find the best classes for your age and experience.

PLACEMENT FOR RETURNING STUDENTS:

Class placement at BDTS is based on a combination of age and ability. Our faculty meets regularly to discuss student progress and placement. We are committed to offering appropriate opportunities for each child. Most of our classes above the beginner level require instructor permission for enrollment. One of our most important jobs is helping each child find a class that will provide them with an appropriate level of challenge so that they can learn and grow as much as possible. Your child's teachers can provide the best guidance for appropriate class placement.

Placement decisions are derived from many years of teaching experience. Often a child is placed in a particular class where he or she will feel confident in order to promote the development of self-esteem. Some students respond to the challenge of being in a class with students who are more proficient pushing themselves to work harder. Placement is highly individual, and the factors that go into the decision are complex.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's progress or placement, please discuss them with your child's teacher or the director. We ask that you set up an appointment for such conversations rather than trying to squeeze it in between classes.

FEES, TUITION, PAYMENT, AND SCHEDULES:

Registration:

There is a yearly registration fee of \$35 for each student. All students need to have completed

online registration before beginning class. Registration fees are non-refundable and a mid-year withdrawal from school will incur a new registration fee upon re-enrollment.

Refunds, Changes, and Withdrawals:

Enrollment in a dance class at BDTs should be considered a commitment for the entire (or the remainder of the) **dance** school year. If your family decides to withdraw from a class, the school director must be notified in writing (email is fine) at least one week prior to the start of the next billing cycle (the 1st of the month).

Tuition is paid in advance of class participation, and once tuition is paid, it is non-refundable. The only exception is in the case of serious disability or injury; in this case, a refund may be granted pending approval of the director and a letter from the student's physician.

Missed Classes:

We encourage students to make up missed classes by attending any other class at the appropriate age and skill level. Your teacher can provide guidance in selecting a good make-up class.

NO CREDIT IS OFFERED TOWARD TUITION FOR CLASSES MISSED. Missed classes may not be used in lieu of tuition for the next payment period, and full tuition is owed on each payment regardless of classes missed in a previous month.

Students who wish to withdraw from a class temporarily must discuss this with their teacher and the director, understanding that re-enrollment is dependent on space in the class at that time, and that they will incur a new registration fee. To hold their space, families may have the option of continuing to pay tuition during the absence.

Payment of Tuition and Fees:

Tuition is based on a dance school year, which consists of 36 weeks divided into 9 monthly payment periods. Some months will have more classes than others, but it will average out over the course of the year. Tuition is based on the number of class hours per week, and the cost per hour is lower as class hours increase. The current tuition schedule is available on our website and here:

YOUTH TUITION 2021-2022																					
hrs per week	45 min	1.0 hr	1.5	1.75	2	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	8.5	9	9.5	10 - 10+
\$ per payment each month	70	75	110	118	130	145	160	175	185	210	220	235	240	245	250	255	260	265	270	275	285

Every customer must provide a credit card to keep on file. Tuition and all other charges are paid by the automatic billing of your credit or bank card that is securely on file in our management system. Tuition is billed on the 1st of each month. Arrangements can be made for those who need to have the payment day delayed. There is no monthly payment by cash or check.

Additional Fees:

Tuition does not include the registration fee, dancewear, shoes, costumes, recital tickets, private lessons, or special events.

Class Cancellations:

We will rarely cancel class due to teacher illness or severe weather conditions. We will often follow regular school closings and delays but not always. Notifications of cancellations will be emailed to all families and posted on the website home page, Facebook, and Instagram. Affected students may attend another existing class to make up for the missed class. There are no refunds for classes missed due to severe weather conditions.

Production Fee:

On February 15th, each student will be charged a \$75 recital production fee for each dance class they are enrolled in. This production fee will be applied towards the spring recitals, story ballet, and musical theatre production (the weekend after Memorial Day Weekend) and covers everything from renting the theater space and backdrops, costumes and props, paying staff, etc.

If your child will not be participating in the spring concert, you must inform us in writing by December 1 to avoid being charged the production fee. Once production fees are charged they are non-refundable.

Adult Classes:

Barriskill offers open level classes for adults ages 18+. Adults have two options for participation: monthly based tuition for the dance calendar year (minimum enrollment must be 3 individuals) or a single class drop-in fee. For 1 hr classes, you may drop-in for \$20/class. For 1.5 hr classes, drop-in is \$28. Drop-ins can be paid in cash, venmo @BDTSDance, or via your Barriskill account. Either way, all adults must be registered with a credit card on file. Class offerings are available on our website at barriskilldance.com/adults

Private Lessons:

Private lessons are not required. We encourage all students to take advantage of their class time and learn to work efficiently and intelligently. If a dancer is interested in one on one attention they may schedule a private lesson with a Barriskill instructor. Private lessons are \$65/hour. **This year all privates must be scheduled through the studio so we know who is coming and going in the event of a COVID-19 case. Please email megan@barriskilldance.com if you are interested in scheduling privates.

CLASS OBSERVATION: ** See COVID-19 Policies-- no parents will be allowed to enter the building this year**

We understand that parents love to be able to observe their children's classes, but we find that faces in the classroom window or at the door can be very distracting to the children. At their discretion, teachers may open or close the class curtains and doors.

Once a year, there is a scheduled parent observation week. At this time, family members are invited to come into the classroom and observe. Check our website for this year's dates. During this week, we also encourage students to visit and observe classes other than their own.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR AND ETIQUETTE:

In order to maintain a happy, healthy, and professional environment our teachers and staff model respectful behavior towards all people and property at the studio. We expect our students to show the same respect to each other, our staff, and the studio.

Students should arrive on time to class ready to work hard and learn. There will be times when students are busy, tired, and have other things on their mind. We expect students to do their best to channel their energies into their dancing at the studio. Sometimes the best relief from a busy and stressful schedule can be a vigorous dance class!

We foster a friendly and relaxed environment, but not at the expense of the work. While students are often excited to see one another, there is not time for socializing during our limited class time each week. All students deserve to have a learning environment free from distractions, with a shared focus on the work at hand.

One of the keys to success as a dancer is strong technique, and class is where students develop that technique. Each class is an opportunity for students to become better at what they are studying. Encourage your children to listen to all feedback given, whether it's directed at them or another dancer. A correction is an honor; it shows how much the teacher cares about your progress as a dancer.

We believe that the most successful students are those who apply themselves in every class and are open to their teachers' knowledge and experience.

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend all classes and rehearsals. At every level, regular participation in class is essential for learning. Our curriculum is designed so that new skills are taught incrementally, building on one another. Students who miss class may find themselves missing crucial building blocks. Younger students have a hard time developing the necessary body awareness and muscle memory for dance when they miss class. In advanced classes, students will have a hard time progressing without being in class every week.

At times, there may be circumstances that cause a child to miss multiple classes or rehearsals. In the case of repeated and/or extended absences—for any reason—participation in the end-of-the-year recital may be denied. In rare cases, a student with multiple absences who demonstrates exceptional commitment and mastery may still be included in the recital; this will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the teacher and director. Good communication with teachers and the director about absences is the first step in demonstrating commitment.

For conservatory students, regular attendance is taken especially seriously. We encourage conservatory level students to take the responsibility to contact their teachers directly.

Arrival and Departure:

Lateness is distracting to both teacher and students, and disruptive to the class, so please arrive with plenty of time to enter class (with hair ready and shoes on) when class starts. We encourage Conservatory students to arrive 10 minutes before class. If parents opt not to wait during their child's class, children should be picked up immediately after their class time ends. Dance is a physical activity that requires the body to be warmed up in order to execute movement safely. Late students miss the proper warm-up and/or barre exercises. At the instructor's discretion, students who arrive late may be instructed to warm up themselves before joining the class, or may be asked to observe class for safety reasons.

Restroom Use:

All students should use the restroom before class, especially our pre-school students. Dancers should not leave class to use the restroom unless absolutely necessary. It is disruptive, and the student misses valuable class time.

Potty-Training Policy:

As a general rule, Barriskill requires that students be potty-trained before signing up for dance class. However, a parent can choose to enroll a student who is not potty-trained in a class if they can be available for diaper changes during class or camp. Our instructors are not responsible for changing diapers.

Termination of Enrollment:

In very rare cases, a student may be asked to leave the school. Bullying, abusive, or repeatedly disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Every effort will be made to correct a problematic situation before terminating enrollment. Termination for cause is not grounds for a tuition refund. In addition, if students repeatedly miss class and/or tuition remains unpaid, and there is no communication from the family, enrollment in the class may be cancelled at the discretion of the studio administration.

Dress Code Requirements: The current dress code is available on our website ([here](#)) and at the studio.

Barriskill welcomes students of all races, ethnicities, genders, and sexualities and maintains zero-tolerance for any form of discrimination.

Our dress code offers options for students to pick the attire they are most comfortable dancing in.

General guidelines:

- For all classes, hair should be securely tied away from the face, ideally in a neat bun. This applies to all levels, including pre-school classes.
- No jewelry or watches other than small stud earrings.
- Ballet shoes should be made of canvas or leather
- Jazz shoes are pull-on (no laces)
- Primary Ballet through Ballet 8/PrePro Ballet requires a particular brand, style, and color of leotard. Students are expected to wear the exact style and color and not try to match it in another brand.
- Dance shoes should not be worn outside, including sneakers for hip-hop.

SPECIAL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL STUDENTS:

Our purpose is to provide the highest quality preschool education in a secure, nurturing, and stimulating environment. BDTS serves the physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of preschool students. We meet these goals with our developmentally appropriate curriculum and ongoing communication with parents.

The first few weeks of classes serve as an introductory phase to help students become comfortable with the overall dance experience, the classroom, their teacher, and their classmates.

From the beginning, we focus on your child's coordination, listening skills, musical awareness, and developing imagination. We accomplish this through age-appropriate music, simple stretching exercises, and dance basics in an environment of creativity.

Preschool dance is not just about learning dance steps. It is about helping children learn to tap into their imagination and express themselves creatively, learning to wait their turn and admire the accomplishments of their peers. It is a great environment to begin to experience self-discipline.

Separating from the parent

One of the challenges for some preschool children may be separating from their parents and attending class on their own. If your child cries or does not want to take class, don't panic. Please do not force your child into class. Ask your teacher for help with the transition if needed.

It may not be the right time.

All children are different, and are ready to attend a dance class independently at different ages. Some young 3-year-olds will readily run into class and participate fully, while some 5-year-olds may not be ready. Try not to compare your child with others, but use your best judgment to determine if this is the right time for them. Dance classes and our studio will always be here, and you may find that it makes sense to take a break and try class again at a later date.

BDTS CLASS DIVISIONS:

The dance classes at BDTS are divided into 4 divisions or programs.

Pre-School Division: includes classes for children up to 6 years old: Creative Movement, Pre-ballet, Pre-tap, Pre-ballet with Pre-tap combinations, Pre-tap with Pre-jazz combinations, Broadway Babies, Hippity Hop, Primary Ballet for 6 yo and Primary Musical Theatre.

Studio Division: these include classes for children ages 7 and up and includes the Tween/ Teen program. Classes in this division usually have no prerequisites and are primarily for beginners. Classes in this recreational division include: ballet, tap, jazz, contemporary, musical theatre and hip hop.

Conservatory Division: Intermediate and advanced level classes for children willing and able to make a commitment to a more rigorous course of study.

Adult Division: for students older than 18.

CONSERVATORY PROGRAM

For students with the required level of interest and ability, BDTs offers a conservatory program, in which students can select a program of study that includes ballet, musical theater, jazz, and/or tap. The conservatory program requires a significant commitment from dancers and their families, and in return provides opportunities to:

- develop skills to the highest degree.
- work with mentors who are focused on student success inside and outside of the classroom.
- build long-lasting friendships
- enjoy a sense of belonging to an extended family of fellow dancers, teachers, and parents.
- discover the long lasting results of hard work and determination.
- develop a lifelong appreciation for the performing arts.

Is the conservatory for me?

The conservatory program may be a good fit for you if:

- You're excited to learn more about dance and its many intersections with your interests.
- You love dancing and would like to perform more!
- You enjoy working collectively with peers who share your joy for dance.
- You love how dancing makes you feel.
- You're fully committed to attending all classes and rehearsals.

The conservatory program may *not* be a good fit for you if:

- You're involved in other extracurricular activities that could interfere with your class, rehearsal, or performance commitments.
- You're doing it because you want to be with your friends, but are not passionate about dance or the commitment.
- You're doing it because your parents or teachers want you to.
- You're *not* fully committed to attending all classes and rehearsals.

Most of our students are balancing multiple commitments and interests, and only some will find that they are willing and able to make the commitment that the conservatory program requires. The conservatory program is not for everyone.

We offer many studio level classes for continuing students who don't want to or cannot commit to the rigor of the conservatory

Admission:

Admission to the conservatory program is by invitation. In some cases (as in a student new to the studio), an audition may be used to facilitate placement. Generally, observation of students in class and performances provides the faculty with the information they need. Our faculty is happy to discuss admission to the conservatory with any interested students.

Requirements:

First and foremost, we require that conservatory students make a solid commitment to classes, rehearsals and performances. Come to each class prepared to learn and without personal distractions. Each class, rehearsal, or performance is an opportunity to become better at what you love to do. Dance full-out, stretch a little further, become more aware of your technique, and make the most of every class.

Be sure to review the attendance policy in this handbook. Clear communication with teachers and the director is key! Failure to communicate with your teacher about absences may jeopardize your participation in performances.

We realize that our students have full lives, and at times may have difficulty fulfilling the commitments for the conservatory. If you find yourself in this situation, the first step is to communicate with your teacher about your situation. We can work with families to determine whether continued participation in the conservatory is appropriate, or if other options should be explored.

2021-22 Conservatory Level Classes:

Ballet 5, 6, 7, 8A, 8B, Pre-Professional

Musical Theatre 4, 5, 6

Jazz 4, 5, 6

SPRING RECITAL

Our annual spring recital is held at Reynolds Industries Theatre on the campus of Duke University (in the Bryan Center.)

The Spring Concert is a fun and exciting performance opportunity for all Barriskill youth students. Participation is encouraged, but not required. The concert offers our students an opportunity to show their families and friends the results of a year's hard work, dedication, and progress. Part of dance training is learning through performance. The rehearsal process can be a tremendous learning experience. Children develop retention skills by working with their classmates on a group performance, they learn the positive aspects of working as a team to create the best end result. These skills contribute not only to successful dancing, but also to success in other areas of life.

Participation

- For younger children, participation in the recital is encouraged but not required. Families may opt out of the recital if desired by emailing the school director.
- Conservatory students are expected to participate in the recital. If extenuating circumstances prevent participation, please let us know as soon as possible.
- Musical Theatre students enrolled in classes Primary Musical Theatre through Musical Theatre 3 will participate in the spring recital. Musical theatre students in Conservatory MTR 4, 5 and 6 will perform in a separate spring musical instead of the recital.
- Ballet students enrolled in classes Ballet 1 through Pre Professional Ballet will participate in the spring story ballet instead of the spring recital.

Production Fee:

On February 15th, each student will be charged a \$75 recital production fee for each dance class they are enrolled in. This production fee will be applied towards the spring recitals, story ballet, and musical theatre production and covers everything from renting the theater space and backdrops, costumes and props, paying staff, etc.

If your child will not be participating in the spring concert, you must inform us in writing by December 1 to avoid being charged the production fee. Once production fees are charged they are non-refundable.

Attendance is important!

- Starting in March, part of class time will be used to learn and rehearse choreography.
- In the case of repeated and extended absences—for any reason—participation in the concert may be denied. In rare cases, students who demonstrate exceptional commitment and mastery may be included in the showcase; this will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the teacher and studio directors. Good communication with teachers about absences is the first step in demonstrating commitment.

Mandatory Dates:

Saturday, May 7th: MTR in studio rehearsal

Saturday, May 14th: Ballet studio rehearsal

****Dates subject to change.**

Performance Week

- The week before the recital, musical, and story ballet all classes are suspended.
- We will share a more detailed rehearsal schedule with you well in advance, because performance week rehearsals are absolutely mandatory for all recital participants.
- It is essential that you keep this week as free from other commitments as possible.

OTHER PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the spring recital and fall and spring musical, there are various opportunities for our most dedicated students to perform.

Nutcracker

Our biggest performance each year is our annual production, which includes over 100 dancers ages 7 and up. Please ask for our Nutcracker Handbook for much more information. Auditions are scheduled for Saturday, September 11, 2021. Rehearsals are generally on Saturday from about 10 am thru 5 pm depending on the role or roles you are cast in. Principal roles rehearse on Friday night. The attendance policy for Nutcracker rehearsals is very strict.

The Studio Company

The Barriskill Studio Company consists of invited Conservatory-level students who are interested in a more dedicated study of dance. The Company is not a competitive team, rather a pre-professional program in which students are given the opportunity to work with guest choreographers from around the country to gain experience auditioning and performing. Company members commit to

an intensive rehearsal and performance schedule in addition to their dance classes throughout the year.