

What Every Parent Should Know Before Selecting A Ballet School



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Selecting a ballet school for your child is not always easy as there are many choices and considerations. Your decision is influenced by your lifestyle, tastes and as importantly how you want your child to develop.

Ask yourself:

- What do you want your child to learn?
- Do you want them to learn “a dance” or how to dance?
- How do you judge if the physical development is safe and appropriate?

There are two types of ballet schools: Recital schools and Professional schools

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

RECITAL SCHOOL

What do you want your child to learn?

- These schools are exclusive and less local. Class frequency is increased as the child moves through the curriculum. There is often an opportunity to perform with an affiliate professional ballet company in classical productions, such as *The Nutcracker Ballet*.

- Some parents enroll their child in the neighborhood recital school because they are looking for the most convenient place to drop off their child. Others are interested in a studio where the dancers compete for trophies, and some parents specifically seek out the recital school for the big year end production, which can often run up to four hours.

- Elective classes are offered that complement the ballet dancer, such as character, modern and Pilates training. Students are exposed to traditional classical music. It is scientifically proven that young children who listen to classical music develop complex brain patterns that give them an advantage in math and critical thinking. This provides a solid foundation for success later in any chosen career.

- Many classes are offered such as lyrical, tap, jazz, dance-line, and hip-hop. Students dance to pop, rock and rap music.



Professional school in dress code



Recital “combo” class

Do you want them to learn “a dance” or how to dance?

- The focus is on the child’s physical development and the building of character and poise. Students learn the fundamentals of ballet from classically trained instructors. Class time is never less than an hour. Students also learn life skills such as timeliness, self-responsibility, self-esteem and professionalism.

- Classes are ½ hour to 45 minutes. Ballet technique is taught at the beginning of class with the remaining time spent practicing a set dance for a recital or competition. Very little time is devoted to teaching ballet skills. The result is that the student will have a difficult time developing strength and learning the fundamentals of ballet.

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

RECITAL SCHOOL

How do you judge if the physical development is safe and appropriate?

- The main objective of a professional school is to nurture core stability, better posture, muscle tone, overall strength and mental focus. A child's physical age and body type are always considered and taken into account. There is individual mentoring for each student in regards to daily classes, summer programs and career choices.

- If the student is participating in the ballet company productions, extra practice time teaches the skill of performing while offering the chance to perform real ballets. Rehearsals are held outside of classroom time. Costumes are loaned out for performances in professional schools.

- Most professional schools have wood sprung Marley floors. A properly sprung floor absorbs energy, preventing injuries. The added protection from the Marley floor provides consistency and cushioning for the dancer.

- Classes are prepared with little regard to the age of the child and their body's physical development. This may result in injuries or health problems in later years.

- Much of the year is devoted to the recital, where each costume per dance will cost \$70 to \$150. As your child gets older they eventually do one or more solos, also with a different costume. Outside of the practiced "dance" many of the numerous fundamentals of ballet will be neglected.

- Many recital schools have non-sprung wood or concrete floors. This type of flooring can create many physical problems for a dancer for they allow "no give."



Professional company's *The Nutcracker*



Recital school show

In Conclusion

Both schools carry their own unique brand of perceptions. At the extremes the Professional school is sometimes viewed as "snobby" or "elitist", whereas the Recital school is known for "cheesy" dance, fish net tights and booty shorts.

Your choice of schools depends on

Convenience:

The school nearest you will likely be a Recital school as they far outnumber Professional schools.

Time Commitment:

The professional school requires a greater commitment due to higher expectations.

Future Expectations:

All skills learned at a Professional school are more likely to carry over into any career, dance or non-dance, and may help contribute to future college academic scholarships.

Our Professional Program

Geiger Ballet's exciting preparatory program is based on the esteemed Russian, English and French schools. Our Early Childhood Program has been codified by Mary Geiger to provide children between 4 and 7 a strong foundation in dance. The Professional Track begins at the age of 8. Geiger Ballet also offers the opportunity of career stage development through the Michigan Classic Ballet Company (MCBC), the school's professional affiliate company. MCBC provides superior full-length ballet productions such as *Giselle*, *Cinderella*, *Coppelia* and *Swan Lake*, and annually performs the holiday favorite *The Nutcracker*.

Mary Celeste Geiger



Mary Celeste Geiger is the owner and artistic director of Geiger Ballet. She has danced professionally for over 10 years and has taught ballet for over 30. At the tender age of 12, Mrs. Geiger was awarded the American Ballet Ford Foundation Scholarship. Her dedication paid off again when at age 19, she was awarded scholarships to the American Ballet Theatre School, New York; the Vaganova School, Russia; and the John Cranko School, Germany; the latter of which she attended. As protégé of Sandra Severo, a world-renowned ballet instructor, Mrs. Geiger danced extensively with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in annual *The Nutcracker* and the *Kresge Concert Series*. In her professional career, she toured three continents and culminated her career as Principal Dancer with the Royal Ballet of Flanders. Mrs. Geiger has given Master classes and has choreographed for Western Michigan University and Interlochen, Michigan; Ballet Alexandria, Louisiana; Tri-Cities Academy of Ballet, Washington; Santa Cruz Ballet, California; Ballet Vesoul, France; and Nyon Ballet School, Switzerland.



Geiger Ballet class



MCBC's Dust Devils



MCBC's Swan Lake



Geiger Ballet class

A Discipline Unparalleled



Geiger Ballet advanced students



MCBC's Les Sylphides

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