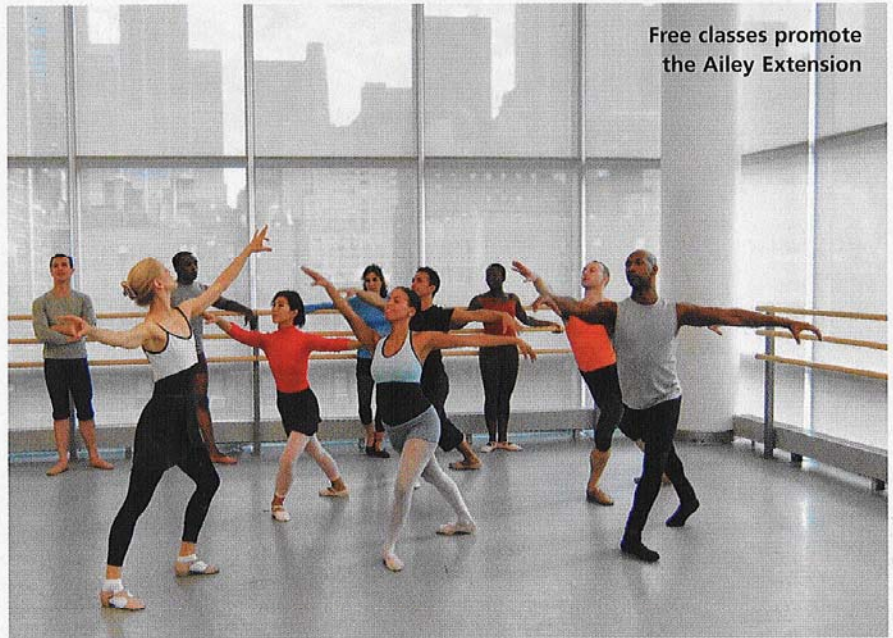


## **FREE CLASSES:** Do They Work?

Giving away a session of jazz, beginning ballet, or tap can spark interest in your studio. But some free offers build enrollment swiftly, while others don't seem to draw. How can you tell what will work?

The Ailey Extension in New York City offers free classes to the audience members who come to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's New York season at City Center each December. "We put fluorescent orange inserts in every *Playbill* offering a free class to new students and an extra class on a 10-class card to returning students," says Yvette Campbell, the Extension's director. Last year, they got more than 200 students that way, and retained about 30 percent. Even if your school isn't connected to a big company, consider giving out free class coupons at recitals. Students' friends and siblings who come might get inspired and want to sample a class.

While it seems human nature to



Free classes promote the Ailey Extension

**Give coupons out at recitals. Friends and siblings may get inspired.**

flock to anything free, classes need to be promoted. Vima Dance Studio in San Francisco used to offer a free monthly class, but few came because it was only on their website. Then the studio teamed up with the Edwardian Ball, a local charity event, by offering

a free class as an extra perk for ticket buyers. The tactic brings Vima up to 20 new students each year.

During National Dance Week, dozens of studios in the Washington, DC, area offer free classes through Dance/MetroDC's Dance Is The Answer web page. This year, the Joy of Motion Dance Center gave away both intro classes and ones with their youth dance ensemble. Although the latter didn't draw many students, perhaps because newcomers felt anxious stepping into an established group, several new faces showed up for intro classes—and came back to register.