



## COMPANY INFORMATION FOR THOSE CONSIDERING AUDITIONING

### ----- SECTION A: Goal / Purpose of Competition Company -----

Our goal for MDM Company members is not only to hone their technique and understanding of the terminology associated with the art of dance, but to instill vital life skills such as hard work, determination, teamwork and how to work well with others. These lessons are integrated into all that we do, both in the classroom and on the stage.

#### PRIMARY GOALS FOR EACH COMPANY MEMBER:

1. Learn how to handle both successes and failures; in the studio, on the stage and in LIFE!
2. Practice what it takes to be successful, both mentally and physically, and broaden the definition of SUCCESS!
3. Grow in technique and performance quality while building relationships to last a lifetime!

#### **IT'S NOT ABOUT WINNING OR PLACEMENTS!**

While the competitions we attend focus on short term rankings, our focus is on GROWTH; growth in performance quality, growth in technical ability, and most importantly, growth in CONFIDENCE. We do *not* focus on placements as we recognize the subjective nature of dance competitions. Further, our primary purpose in attending competitions is focused solely on developing dancers and giving them additional stage performance opportunities.

#### **WE ARE NOT A "COMPETITION STUDIO"!**

Our training philosophy is rooted in the belief that developing and maintaining proper technique is fundamental to all dance training. We believe that it is far better to be "well trained than well rehearsed". To that end, you can expect the following:

- Technique classes will always be **the most important** avenue for growing as a dancer.
- We will never use technique class time for company rehearsals. All Company rehearsals are scheduled *outside* of technique class times, which means almost all rehearsals will take place on Saturdays.
- Regular attendance in technique classes is required of all company dancers.
- It is important to understand that dancers grow in technical ability through attending CLASS; not through rehearsals.

#### **IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT COMPETITION DANCES, BUT ALSO ABOUT TRAINING**

Being a member of the Company means that you are interested in enhanced training opportunities. These include learning high level competition dances, but that is just a piece of the training puzzle. A big part of the puzzle is providing Company dancers with opportunities for additional and enhanced training. These opportunities include Master classes, extra conventions, artist-in-resident classes, and programming designed to broaden the technical, mental, and physical capacities of the Company members.

#### **MDM Company IS NOT a Recreational Program**

We do not consider our Company to be a recreational program. It is a very rewarding program, but one that takes hard work, dedication, positive attitude, and **commitment**. We ask parents and dancers to consider the *time, financial, and work commitments* as they evaluate their decision to audition for MDM Company.

## ----- SECTION B: CLASS & CASTING PLACEMENTS -----

Because technical development is at the core of our curriculum and training philosophy, we utilize a class placement system that allows dancers to develop at an individual pace, while also being with peers of a similar age. We have many different levels of classes and we give each dancer an **individual** placement. For new dancers, we will evaluate each dancer in ballet, tap, jazz and hip hop to determine the best class levels, keeping in mind that new dancers may be placed in a level designed to refine technical development. *Class placement at MDM will vary and likely be different than that of other area dance studios.*

### **How is Placement on the Competitive Team Determined?**

- All dancers are required to audition at MDM for the Company; either in person on the scheduled day in May or by video submission (must be submitted by date of live audition).
- Placement on MDM Company is based on performance quality, ability and technique as determined by the Midwest Dance Mechanix team of instructors.
- Dancers must audition each year; placement is not transferred from year to year.

### **LEVELS OF COMPETITION: Placement**

Each local competition that we attend generally has 3 different levels of competition; novice, intermediate and advanced. These levels are based on a variety of factors including number of technique classes taken weekly, overall dancer ability, and length of time a dancer has been competing.

ALL of these factors are taken into consideration to determine the best LEVEL for each of the dances that we create for company. We will cast dances in all THREE of these varying skill levels. Competition entry levels are not negotiable and these decisions are at the full discretion of the MDM instructor team. We ask that all dancers and parents TRUST these decisions have been made with the goal of giving each dancer/dance the best chance to grow and feel successful.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Dependent on each competition's specific requirements, a dancer may be cast in one dance that will compete at the Advanced level, **while also** being cast in a dance that will compete at the Intermediate level. It is the **totality of the group** that determines the level placement for each dance.

CONVENTION PLACEMENTS: If/when we attend out of town **conventions**, there will often not be varying entry levels of competition. In those situations, we MAY only enter our Advanced level dances for competition purposes, but will **encourage all** dancers to participate in the convention classes. This determination will be made on an annual basis.

### **What are the age & skill level requirements required to audition for Company?**

- We offer Company opportunities for dancers ranging in age from age 6 to age 18.
- In general, we recommend that dancers age 6-7 have a minimum of 3 years dance training and have completed at least Mini Ballet 1 and Mini Jazz 1.
- For dancers age 8 and above, we generally recommend a class level placement of Ballet 2 or higher.
- For dancers age 12 and above, we recommend a class level placement of Teen Ballet 3/Junior Ballet 4 or higher.
- All dancers should have experience in **both** ballet and jazz.

Dancers who are interested in the Competition Company should **be prepared to take both ballet and jazz on an ongoing basis** as those classes are required for all Company members.

In order to ensure proper technical development and progress, Company dancers are not permitted to take weekly, recreational or technique classes at other studios.

### **How many Company dances can Company members expect to be cast in?**

- At the time of audition, dancers and parents are asked to consider the maximum financial investment they are willing to commit to for the year. They will also be asked to give their time investment preferences. The audition application will have a place to make these commitments. When casting dances, our casting team will take your financial & time commitments into consideration and honor them through casting placements.
- The MDM instructor team will make placements to various dances based on skill and artistic interpretation while also taking into consideration the maximum financial & time investment each family has committed to.
- A dancer will never be placed in *more* dances than the associated financial investment indicated on the audition form, but may *not* be placed in dances that correspond to the maximum financial commitment. In other words, just because you are willing to commit to the maximum financial investment does not necessarily mean that your dancer will be cast in the maximum number of dances.
- It is typical for new company members to be placed in 1 - 2 group dances the first year. Returning dancers average 3 - 5 dances depending on how many speciality dance classes they take (i.e. hip hop, tap, music theatre, etc.)
- Casting is not a “pick and choose” situation. Being a part of the MDM Company requires TRUSTING that the staff has the goal of giving as many opportunities as possible to each dancer and choosing opportunities that will give each dancer the best chance to grow and succeed. Therefore, we will honor the financial and time parameters given to us, but will not allow dancers to “pick and choose” which dances they participate in once casting is released.
- **Solo expectations:** Solos are an important part of dance training, especially as a student gets older, but they are **not the most important** component to a dancers training. Dancers must first learn to match and meld with a group before working to stand out. *We have a limited amount of solo opportunities each season (20 per the solo restrictions at conventions) so these opportunities will go to our oldest dancers and those that are at the top of an age category first.* In general, dancers under the age of 10-12, should not expect a solo casting.
- For financial expectations associated with casting, refer to Section D.

### **How does the Short & Suite Nutcracker tie into Company?**

For the past 7 years, we have produced a stand alone Nutcracker performance cast solely of our Company and En Avant Company dancers. We plan to produce our 8th production of the Short & Suite Nutcracker the first weekend in December 2025.

Company members are invited to OPT IN for casting *consideration* for this production. However, **casting is not guaranteed to all Company members** as it is dependent on a variety of factors including costume sizes, number of dancers required for the choreography, experience level of dancers, etc.

If a Company member is cast in the Nutcracker production, they will be required to attend all Nutcracker rehearsals in September - November. These rehearsals will take place on Saturdays. Dancers who participate in our Nutcracker production will NOT be able to participate in other local Nutcracker productions due to scheduling conflicts.

Nutcracker participation carries an additional cost that is separate from the cost of other Company dances.

## ----- SECTION C: TIME, TRAINING & CLASS REQUIREMENTS -----

### What are the Class Requirements for Company members?

- Dancers ages 6 - 11: 1 weekly ballet class and 1 weekly jazz class at MDM
- Dancers ages 12 - 14: 2 weekly ballet classes and 1 weekly jazz class at MDM
- Dancers ages 15+: 2 weekly ballet classes and 2 weekly jazz classes at MDM
- Dancers in select dances may be required to take more than the standard number of weekly ballet and jazz classes. (If we have dances that are designated as "elite" level dances)
- In order to compete in a specify style of dance (i.e. Hip Hop, Tap, Music Theatre...), dancers must be enrolled in a minimum of 1 class per week of that style of dance. Enrollment in this style of dance must be for the entirety of the competition season.
- **Company dancers are expected to continue training over the summer months.** Because we recognize that vacations, summer intensives, and other factors can make consistent enrollment difficult for some families, we will accept punch card purchases for our Company dancers. At a minimum, Company dancers should be taking as many ballet and jazz classes as possible over the summer months to maintain their technical development.

### Can dancers participate in other extracurricular activities?

- Company dancers must have a willingness to **make dance a priority above other extracurricular activities.** While we never forbid dancers to participate in other activities, we strongly encourage each dancer to carefully evaluate whether Company makes sense in light of all other activities they participate in. *It is impossible to create cohesive dances without consistent attendance.* Our attendance and absence policies are designed to be fair to all Company participants while also recognizing the reality of what it takes to accomplish our goals for our Company.
- Only **mandatory** school activities will be excused for Company. Mandatory activities do not include activities that you have chosen to be a part of (i.e. dance team, debate, theatre, school sports teams, etc.)
- Almost all of our Company dances rehearse on Saturdays, so this should be taken into consideration as **repeated Saturday absences for other extracurricular activities will not be feasible.**
- February - April is prime competition season preparation. Rehearsals during this timeframe are mandatory and can not be missed in favor of other optional outside activities.
- Company members may not miss the rehearsal prior to a performance and expect to participate in the performance.

### What is the General Time Commitment for being on Company?

- In addition to the weekly class requirements, Company members are required to attend weekly rehearsals during the duration of the Competition season (August - May). Note that there may be some weeks with no rehearsals; depending on how many dances a member is placed in. There may also be additional rehearsals for select dances.
- Almost ALL rehearsals will take place on Saturdays, but it is *possible* that some dances may rehearse during the weekdays. These rehearsals will be 45 minutes in length.
- All choreography for Company dances is set in August, while the studio is closed for regular classes.
- **Company members will be required to participate in a variety of Master Classes over the month of August 2024.** We will bring in Master choreographers to set some pieces at the same time as these Master classes. Attendance is mandatory in order to be cast in a piece set by a guest/master choreographer.
- *Company dancers should plan to be at the studio through the month of August for choreography and other company - specific classes.*
- Company dancers are allowed 3 rehearsal absences, per dance, per season (August - May).

## **Schedule Expectations**

- The choreography schedule for August will be distributed in mid-July.
- The Company Rehearsal Schedule for the season will be distributed in late August or early September.
  - **Important:** We work very hard to give you a complete schedule at the beginning of the season so that you are able to make plans. However, *please understand that there will be times when the schedule will need to be adjusted or additional rehearsals will need to be added.* But in general, you will have a fairly complete schedule at the beginning of September.
- From September - December, the weekly Saturday rehearsal schedule will primarily consist of Nutcracker preparation. All other company dances will be scheduled to rehearse a minimum of 3 times from September - December to ensure that the choreography is not forgotten.
- Beginning in January, we will have a consistent weekly Saturday rehearsal schedule for all Company dances. Each group dance rehearsal will be 45 minutes and the schedule will be consistent each week.
  - **Important Note:** while we do our best to stack dances for specific age groups, we cannot guarantee that dancers will not have breaks in their rehearsal schedule. We generally juggle 40+ dances spread out among 100 kids in 6 different studios. It is a GIANT puzzle and it would be impossible for us to take each dancers individual schedule into consideration!
- We do use times when the studio is closed for regular classes to rehearse. Examples include Mid-Semester Fall Break, Thanksgiving Break week, the week prior to Christmas, the first week in January, Martin Luther King Day, and Mid-Semester Winter Break. We use these days to review choreography quickly and give additional time to dances that may need extra rehearsal time.
- There may be some Saturdays that we don't have rehearsals, but those will be few!
- Company dancers are allowed 3 absences (non-illness related) per season.

## **How Many Competitions & Extra Performances will be Required?**

- Company members perform in a Company Showcase in February or March, attend 2 or 3 local dance competitions and 1 out-of-town dance convention in the Spring months (February - May).
- Company members will be invited to attend various **optional** dance conventions throughout the year as well; but are only **required** to attend the 2 or 3 local competitions and 1 out-of-town dance convention. ***Select dances may attend additional out of town competitions and some dances may not compete at the out of town convention.***
- We make our decision regarding which competitions we will attend over the summer. You will have these dates in the summer. Please note these decisions will be made **before** Prom dates, Homecoming dates, etc. are released, so dancers will need to be prepared for potential conflicts.
- As Company dancers get older and move into Advanced level classes, *they will often not have Holiday Showcase or Spring Recital dances.* This is due to the fact that Company members already spend a great deal of time and money on performances and costumes. We reserve our "recitals" for more recreational and younger dancers who are still growing and need more stage opportunities.
- At our Spring Recital, **some** Company dances WILL be included in the Recital. Dancers should plan on this participation being required unless they have been given express permission to miss by Miss Jana.

## **What Other Extra Training is Required of Company Members?**

- Company dancers are required to attend any Master Class opportunities that MDM offers in the summer months or during the Competition season (August - May).
- We will have one in-house "Guest Teacher Critiques" during the season. This will be a weekend of training given by Master/Guest instructors and it typically in September or January. **It is mandatory.**
- Certain age groups will have "Company Class" on select Saturday mornings and/or weekdays during the season. "Company Class" will cover a wide variety of specialty training including improvisation, audition preparation, using emotion, weight sharing and partnering, strength and flexibility training, etc.

### **Can Company dancers participate in other extracurricular activities?**

- Company dancers must have a willingness to **make dance a priority above other extracurricular activities**. While we never forbid dancers to participate in other activities, we strongly encourage each dancer to carefully evaluate whether Company makes sense in light of all other activities they participate in.
- Only **mandatory** school activities will be excused for Company. Mandatory activities do not include activities that you have chosen to be a part of (i.e. dance team, debate, theatre, etc.)
- Almost all of our Company dances rehearse on Saturdays, so this should be taken into consideration as repeated Saturday absences for other extracurricular activities will not be feasible.
- Company dancers are allowed 3 absences (non-illness related) per season.

### **----- SECTION D: FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS & POLICIES -----**

Being a part of Company is a financial investment that should be carefully considered. Company members will be expected to keep up to date with all Company financial commitments throughout the season, including monthly tuition fees.

NOTE: Monthly tuition is NOT part of Company costs. Because we believe in keeping technique classes our top priority, those fees will also be totally separate from Company costs. Due to increased costs and inflation, tuition rates for Fall 2024 MAY be adjusted to more accurately reflect the increased business costs.

### **What are the additional Company Costs?**

- The total financial commitment varies depending on each dancers casting. Each dance that we cast will generally carry a different cost. The cost of each dance is dependent on the number of dancers in the dance, the choreography rate, costume selected, props needed, etc. *This is why we ask for a maximum financial investment up front to use as a guideline for determining casting for each individual.*
- The financial commitment also varies depending on the *category* of dance a member is placed in. For example, solos, duos, and trios carry a higher financial commitment than larger group dances.
- Once casting is complete and the cost of each dance has been calculated, each dancer will receive a financial contract detailing the following costs:
  - Cost for each dance they have been cast in. The cost for each dance will include choreography costs, costume costs, rehearsal costs, entry fees for competitions, and administrative fees. *These costs will be aggregated into a single cost for each dance.*
  - Cost for mandatory convention registrations
  - Cost for in-studio mandatory events such as Technique Intensive and in-house Conventions
  - Nutcracker cost for those cast/participating
- The above costs will be totaled and divided into 6-8 monthly installment payments. Company installment payments will be due after the 15th of the month, beginning in September.
- A **non-refundable** \$250 deposit will be due on June 20th to formally accept your company position.

- The following is a list of additional costs that are additional and not included in the financial contract described above:
  - Transportation and Lodging costs for conventions and competitions
  - Proper shoes for the style of dance being performed
  - Company Jacket
  - Master Classes fees offered at MDM
  - Company earrings
  - Company make-up
  - Monthly tuition fees & Recital costume fees/costs
- Company members are **required** to use Auto-Pay for monthly tuition and Company installment payments.
- Failure to pay Company Fees by the monthly due date may result in suspension from Company until paid.

## ----- SECTION E: AUDITION GUIDELINES -----

- You must register to audition by filling out the audition application on our website. Registration will open on or before May 1st at [www.dancemechanix.biz/auditions](http://www.dancemechanix.biz/auditions)
- A fee of \$35 is required to audition and must be paid in full in order to audition.
- 2024/2025 Auditions will take place as follows:
 

<b><u>May 20, 2025:</u></b>	<b><u>May 21, 2025:</u></b>
5:30 pm: Competition age 6 - 9	5:30 pm: Competition age 14 - 15
6:45 pm: Competition age 10 - 11	7:15 pm: Competition age 16+
8:00 pm: Competition age 12 - 13	
- Dancers should arrive a minimum of 15 minutes early to check in and get an audition number. We will not do a formal "warm up" in the audition so dancers should come early and use open studios to warm themselves up prior to their audition time.
- Dancers should audition based on their "Competition Age" (**age as of January 1, 2026**)
- Bring ballet and jazz shoes, dress in leotard or dance top/tank (color of your choice) with dance shorts/pants and a neat bun. All dancers will participate in the jazz portion of the audition.
- Dancers will wear an audition number during the audition.
- ONLY MDM instructors and staff are allowed in the audition room.
- Placement on Company is at the sole discretion of the MDM Instructors.
- Communication regarding acceptance on the MDM Company will be made within 2 weeks of the audition.