

Welcome to the Marie Walton Mahon Dance Academy

This handbook contains information for new and current students.

Marie Walton Mahon Dance Academy
Cnr Young and Lloyd Roads
Lambton, Newcastle

Phone: (02) 4952 9294
Email: mwmdance@optusnet.com.au
Website: www.mwmdance.com

Classes in

- u classical ballet – from tiny tots to RAD Advanced 2 level
- u open ballet classes
- u contemporary
- u jazz
- u choreographed groups
- u performance training
- u stretch and body conditioning

Philosophy

The Marie Walton Mahon Dance Academy aims to provide a supportive learning environment that allows students to develop a high standard of technical and performance dance skills, and promotes their love and appreciation of dance.

Dance Styles

Classical Ballet – Classical ballet is the foundation for most styles of dance. Learning ballet provides students with core stability, strength, control and correct body alignment. Training in ballet also provides a strong technical base for training in other dance styles, such as jazz, contemporary and tap.

The MWM Dance Academy teaches ballet and offers ballet examinations using the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) syllabus. Based in the UK, RAD is an international dance education and training organisation. Further information on the RAD can be found on their website: www.rad.org.au

Contemporary – Contemporary dance is a more relaxed form of dance than ballet, based on a wide range of free movements. Classes in contemporary dance are offered to students from Grade 3 and above.

Jazz – Jazz dance is a high energy style of dance and is a mix of ballet technique combined with dynamic movements, performed to modern /popular music. MWM Dance Academy teaches jazz dance technique and movement quality from Primary onwards.

Stretch and Body Conditioning – Classes designed to help students increase their flexibility and strength are offered from Grade 3 onwards.

Marie Walton Mahon Dance Academy

History – The Marie Walton Mahon Dance Academy was founded in 1984 by Marie Walton Mahon, ARAD. Marie trained in ballet in Maitland and then in Newcastle gaining honours in the RAD Advanced examination, and the Solo Seal Award. She then studied in France, at the *Centre de Dance Classique* at Cannes, under Rosella Hightower.

Marie has danced professionally with the *Ballet National de Marseilles* under the direction of Roland Petit, touring throughout Europe. In 1973, she returned to Newcastle to open a dance school. She is a Royal Academy of Dance Vocational Graded Examiner, a Registered Teacher and is involved in the RAD's Faculty of Education.

By the 1980s, students from the school were performing successfully in RAD examinations, local and national eisteddfods, including the Sydney Eisteddfod, and at international dance competitions such as the RAD's Genee International Ballet Competition. Many senior students have gained places in well-known dance schools and companies, both throughout Australia and internationally.

The school, under Marie's auspices, has prided itself on its innovative teaching techniques and its focus on each student's personal development. In 2007, Marie launched the National College of Dance, offering accredited training to young students wishing to pursue a career in the dance industry.

The school is supported by the Rose Walton Memorial Benefit Fund, which undertakes many fund raising activities. Funds raised are used to assist students with costume hire, and provide encouragement awards, and internal and senior scholarships.

Artistic Director – Brett Morgan became the Artistic Director of the MWM Dance Academy in 2010. Brett has a wealth of experience as a dancer, dance teacher and as a dance director. He danced for six years with the Australia Ballet Company, then joined the Sydney Dance Company, where he danced under Graeme Murphy. Other roles with the Sydney Dance Company have included Dance Master, Rehearsal Director and Dance Director.

His teaching experience includes the provision of master classes in classical ballet and contemporary, both in Australia and internationally. Brett is also the founder and Artistic Director of the Mod Dance Company.

Teaching Staff – The staff at MWM Dance Academy are a close working, creative team, with extensive experience in the teaching of dance. The staff includes many specialist teachers with considerable expertise in many different dance and dance-related areas, including jazz and contemporary dance, choreography, performance, musical appreciation and physiotherapy.

All staff are encouraged to pursue individual professional development opportunities and most staff have or are in the process of gaining qualifications in teaching and assessment. Profiles of the MWM Dance Academy teaching staff are available on the school website.

About the School

School Facilities – The MWM Dance Academy has 3 large, 2 medium and 2 small dance studios. All studios have sprung wooden floors with tarkett covering (a vinyl non-slip flooring), ballet *barres* and floor-to-ceiling mirrors (to help students view their body positioning and alignment), and all are fully air conditioned.

Each studio has a variable-speed sound system, while larger studios are also equipped with a piano. The school has change rooms for junior, senior and male students and a small kitchen. Several under cover, on-site parking spaces are available, with ample on-street parking.

Office Hours and Communications – The office is staffed from 10am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday, and from 8.30am to 1.30pm on Saturdays. If you would like to discuss your child's progress or have any queries, please contact the office. Information on upcoming activities and events, and changes to the timetable are displayed on noticeboards in the foyer and in the fortnightly newsletter. To receive the newsletter by email, please provide the office with your email address. Classes are not held on public holidays but will be held on pupil free days and show days. If the school is closed on public holidays, you will be notified by newsletter and on the noticeboard.

If you wish to sell any outgrown or unneeded dancewear, shoes or other items, a 'for sale' notice can be placed on the students' noticeboard in the foyer.

Enrolment – Enrolment forms, including the medical form and the terms and conditions of enrolment, are available from the office. All enrolment forms should be returned to the office for processing. Returning students are given a re-enrolment form in Term 4 of each year.

Class Placement and Size – Students at MWM Dance Academy are placed in classes with students of a similar age and standard. New students may be asked to undertake an assessment to assist the faculty in placing them in an appropriate class.

Class sizes are limited to a level appropriate to the age and abilities of the students and the experience of the teaching staff. If a student wishes to enrol in a class that is full, they will be placed on a wait list until a vacancy arises.

Students undertaking the RAD syllabus take part in a weekly 30 minute technical class, consisting of 3-4 students. During the technical class, students receive more individualised coaching and feedback from one of our teachers.

Tuition Fees & Payment – Tuition fees are invoiced by the term, with all payment and class details are listed on the invoice. Once your child has been enrolled in a class for the term, fees are payable for this class for the entire term.

Invoices are compiled based on an average term length. While some terms are shorter/longer than others and may contain public holidays, invoices are not altered. The possible alteration in the number of classes is balanced by the extra classes for exams, performances and concerts that are provided at no extra charge.

A 5% early payment discount is given when class fees are paid in full by the due date. A family discount is available if there is more than one student from a family enrolled at the school.

Fees may be paid weekly with the following conditions: four week's payment must be paid in advance at the commencement of each term, with weekly payments made from there on. Please note that outstanding fees can not be carried over into the following term.

Any accounts in arrear will be charged a \$10 account keeping fee. In the event of unpaid accounts, all legal and recovery costs, including commissions paid, will be added to the amount owing. The interest on any outstanding accounts will be charged at 8% pa. Fees will not be refunded except for long-term illness.

If there is any default in the above payment terms, all monies owing to MWM Dance Academy become payable. Students whose fees have been defaulted will be excluded from classes until any fees due are paid in full.

Fees can be paid by cash, cheque, credit card or Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), either at the office or through your bank. Cheques should be made out to: Marie Walton Mahon Dance Academy. Please note a small charge will apply to credit card transactions. Prices for classes can be obtained from the office.

Timetable – The school timetable is available for viewing in the school foyer. As the timetable may be subject to change during examination and concert times, it should be checked periodically at these times.

Cancelled & Missed Classes – If you wish to withdraw your child from classes, please inform the MWM Dance Academy in writing (letter or email) as soon as possible. Please note that classes missed due to short-term illness, holidays or other personal commitments are non-refundable and non-transferable.

If your child is sick or unable to attend a class, please contact the office, so that your child's dance teacher can be informed of their absence.

Private Lessons - Students will be offered a make-up lesson or a refund, if 24 hours notice is given prior to a missed private lesson. To advise of a missed private lesson, please contact the office by phone (02 4952 9294) or by email (mwmdance@optusnet.com.au). 24 hours notice of a missed private lesson means that the lesson can be offered to another student.

Lost & Found – Students should take all dance bags and other items into the studio with them or leave them with a parent, as MWM Dance Academy can not take responsibility for lost property.

Please check that your child has all their belongings when they leave the studio and as all dancewear looks similar, it is a good idea to check that they have not accidentally picked up other student's dancewear. We encourage you to clearly name all your child's dancewear, so that they can be returned to you easily, if lost.

Any items found in the dance studios are placed in the lost property bins in the alcove beside Studio 5. Please check these if your child has lost any dancewear or other items. Any items remaining in the lost property bins are given away at the end of the semester.

Classwear & Grooming

Classwear & Footwear – It is important that students wear correct, well-fitted dancewear and footwear for each dance class. This allows them to perform all dance steps safely and correctly, and allows teachers to view and correct their body alignment.

A list of dancewear and footwear required for each dance class and/or grade is available from the office. It is essential that students wear the correct footwear only. Therefore, we ask that you only purchase the shoes detailed in our list.

Please note that your child's first *pointe* shoes must be checked by their dance teacher to ensure a correct fit, **before** elastics or ribbons are sewn on. Your child should not wear new shoes until they have been checked, so that they remain clean and can be returned if the fit is incorrect.

For personal safety reasons, the MWM Dance Academy staff request that all students either cover their dancewear when arriving or leaving the school, or change into street clothes. We also recommend that students only wear their dance shoes inside the dance studios, as this will help prolong the life of dance shoes and prevent dirt being brought into studios.

MWM Dance Academy track suits are available for purchase through the office. Track suits are required for all performance groups.

Grooming – All hair should be neatly secured away from the face and neck. This ensures that hair does not catch on clothing or the face, and prevents loose hair distracting the student.

For ballet classes, girls should wear their hair in a tidy bun, or if the hair is too short to make a bun, hair should be held back off the face with bobby pins or a stretch head band in a colour to match the leotard.

Boys' hair should be tidy and secured off the face as needed. For jazz and contemporary dance classes, girls may wear their hair in a ponytail. Younger students going from a contemporary or a jazz class into a ballet lesson, should wear their hair in a bun for both, to prevent lost time between classes.

Make-up may be worn by senior students only and should be kept to a minimum. Make-up for performances should be appropriate to the venue, ie: light (street) make-up can be worn for studio photos and performances with natural lighting, while heavier or stage make-up can be worn for performances at larger venues or under stage lighting.

Jewellery – Students should only wear stud-type ear-rings to class, as larger ear-rings, jewellery and watches are distracting, may cause injury to your child or others, and may damage dancewear.

Health & Safety

Attendance – It is important for your child's development that they attend classes regularly. This is particularly important leading up to examinations, MWM Dance Academy concerts and eisteddfods. Once your child has committed to participating in school concerts or performance groups, they will be expected to maintain regular attendance at all rehearsals.

Drop-off & Pick-up – Students should arrive at least 10 minutes before the start of class to allow them to change from street or cover-up clothes, and to put on their dance shoes. This will ensure that they are ready to commence the warm-up exercises at the start of class.

Please note that classes start and finish at the scheduled times. For safety reasons, younger students should be escorted into the school foyer by a parent.

Any student who arrives late should avoid disrupting the class by waiting until the end of an exercise, before knocking on the studio door and entering quietly. Late students may be asked to perform warm-up exercises before joining in with the class. Please ensure that younger children have gone to the toilet before their dance class.

Students should be collected as soon as possible after their dance class, as MWM Dance Academy staff are unable to provide supervision in the foyer. Younger students should wait in the foyer for parent pick up. The waiting area has video surveillance for student protection and the school is patrolled at night. We ask that parents be aware of strangers and report any concerns to the office.

If your child needs to leave a class early, they should tell their teacher at the start of the class.

Student Behaviour – The MWM Dance Academy aims to provide a safe, clean and enjoyable environment for all students and staff. We encourage parents to report any accidents and facility, student or teacher problems to the management.

Students are expected to behave with consideration for other students, teachers and school property. This means that they should not disrupt the class by speaking loudly or performing activities other than class exercises. Mobile phones should be turned off while students are in class.

Teachers should be addressed by their title, eg: Miss Smith or Mr Brown. If your child needs a toilet break during class time, they should tell the teacher immediately to prevent accidents.

MWM Dance Academy has a no bullying policy. We ask that all students endeavour to make the school a pleasant place to train and work with others. A copy of the anti-bullying policy can be obtained from the office. If you have any concerns about bullying, please contact the management to discuss these.

Student/Teacher Interaction – Parents should be aware that teaching dance involves physical contact and teachers may need to make hands-on contact to adjust students' alignment and to demonstrate proper motion.

Food & Drink – Students should only take a spill-proof water bottle into class. A water cooler is situated in the foyer if a refill is needed. While students are permitted to eat between classes, all other food and drinks should be left in dance bags. A small kitchen with a fridge, microwave and kettle is available for use.

Illness & Injuries – It is important for parents to be aware that while dance is a strenuous physical activity that carries some risk of injury, all teaching at MWM Dance Academy is based on safe dance technique, and all teaching staff are trained to deal with common accidents and injuries. If your child experiences illness or injury during class, you will be notified immediately.

Please advise the school if your child is ill or injured, and will miss a lesson. If your child is recovering from an illness or injury, they may observe their class and should only participate as able. If your child has any medical problems relevant to their dancing, please inform the office.

Waiting Areas & Change Rooms – The foyer, change rooms and toilets are shared by all students. We ask that students and their families try to keep these rooms tidy and prevent disruption to classes by keeping noise to a minimum while using these areas.

Parking Safety – To ensure the safety of all students and visitors to the school, it is important that cars in the undercover parking area are reversed parked only. Please check for students and siblings when entering and leaving this area.

Students and siblings should not run or play in the undercover parking area, and should not move between cars that are double parked. We also ask that parents

avoid blocking our neighbours' driveways.

Photography – Due to child protection laws and privacy issues, we are unable to allow parents to take photos or videos of students during any Open Days or concerts. Please indicate on your child's enrolment form if you give permission for your child to be photographed and for their image to be used on the MWM Dance Academy website or in school publications. Please note that no names or other identifying information are used with photos on the website or in school publications.

Exams, Eisteddfods & Concerts

Examinations – All students at the MWM Dance Academy are given the opportunity to undertake the RAD examinations in classical ballet. Annual examinations are offered from Pre-Primary level (age 5 and above) to Grade 5 in the Graded Examination Syllabus, and from Intermediate Foundation to Advanced 2 in the Vocational Graded Syllabus.

Students undertake the Vocational Graded Syllabus following completion of the Graded Examination Syllabus. This syllabus focuses on giving students the training necessary to follow a career in dance or a dance related area.

While examinations are not compulsory, they are a good opportunity for your child to develop their classical ballet skills, demonstrate their progression and gain confidence with examinations.

To enter an examination, students need to maintain regular attendance at syllabus classes and should endeavour to practise the syllabus work at home. Entry into examinations requires submission of the official RAD entry form, along with the entry fee. You will be provided with an entry form well before the due date. Completed forms are submitted to the office.

The examination timetable will be placed on a noticeboard in the foyer close to examination time. Parents should check both arrival and pick-up times. Students are asked to arrive for a warm-up at least one hour before the start of the examination and to allow time for dressing.

To participate in examinations, students are required to wear the school exam uniform, including a leotard, accessories and character skirts if needed. Graded students' uniforms are hired from the Rose Walton Fund. Vocational students' uniforms may be hired or purchased.

All students are expected to provide their own ballet socks or tights, ballet and character shoes. To help graded students receive good marks for grooming and presentation, these students are dressed and their hair prepared by a team of volunteers.

Graded examinations are held at the MWM Dance Academy premises, while vocational examinations are held at an alternative venue in Newcastle. Please note that examinations are generally held during daytime hours. Should your child

need to take time off from school, you will find that schools are generally understanding and supportive.

Winter Workshops – Three day workshops for students undertaking graded and vocational examinations are held during the July school holidays. The workshops are not compulsory but are a good opportunity for students to prepare for their examinations, build their confidence and improve their technique.

Summer Intensives – A week-long workshop for senior students is held each January. The aim of the workshop is to help students prepare for their return to dance after the long summer break. The workshop is open to all MWM Dance Academy students and also attracts students from throughout Australia.

Eisteddfods & External scholarships Students at MWM Dance Academy are provided with opportunities to compete in eisteddfods (dance competitions) and scholarships throughout the dance year. These include group dances in the Sydney Eisteddfod, solo dances in eisteddfods and also in external scholarships, such as the RAD's Isobel Anderson Awards.

All students are encouraged to audition for a place in eisteddfod groups early in Term 1. Once a student has been invited to join a group, a permission note must be signed and returned to the office. By signing this note, parents are committing their child to maintaining attendance at rehearsals and performances, and the hire or purchase of a performance costume and accessories. Students will also be required to attend an extra lesson each week, during which they will learn and rehearse the eisteddfod dance.

All group costumes are designed and made by the school. Costumes are either specifically made for each child, in which case parents will be required to pay for them, or hired for a nominal fee through the Rose Walton Memorial Benefit Fund, from the school's stock of costumes. Hire costumes should be returned promptly, following the final performance. Please ensure that they are clean and in a good condition.

The school retains the right of distribution for all group costumes. These costumes must not be sold outside the school and should be kept in good condition, so that they can be sold to the school or to other students, if needed.

Solo Dances – Students may be invited to perform a solo dance at an eisteddfod, in which case, they will be need to undertake at least one private lesson per week. Solo dances can be performed in classical ballet, jazz or contemporary. Students may need to have a costume made for a solo dance or may be able to hire a suitable costume from the school. Costume requirements, including hair and make-up, can be discussed with the student's private lesson teacher.

Music for solo dances is selected by the private lesson teacher and recorded onto a CD. The CDs are provided to the student for a nominal fee, with the money paid directly to the teacher. The student is responsible for providing the correct music

to the eisteddfod organisers. CDs should be marked with the name of the student and the section they are performing in. Students are advised to take a backup copy of their music to eisteddfods.

It is advisable to purchase a copy of eisteddfod schedules to ensure that you have a good understanding of the entry requirements for each eisteddfod.

Internal Scholarship & End of Year Concerts – A scholarship concert is held after exams, to display the students' work and to present cash and tuition scholarships, and encouragement awards to successful students.

Students are eligible for scholarships and awards if they have been enrolled for at least 12 months and were not a winner of the same scholarship in the previous year. Scholarship winners are chosen by an independent examiner during an assessment class, while other prizes are voted on by the teaching staff.

The scholarship concert is organised by the Rose Walton Memorial Benefit Fund committee and is one of their principal fund raising events. Donations for scholarships are welcomed from friends, family and local businesses.

An end of year concert is held in December of each year, at a local theatre. This concert is a production for all students, from the tiny tots to the full-time students. Rehearsals for the concert begin after exams in Term 3 and are held during some of the allocated class time. Extra rehearsals may be held on a Saturday and Sunday closer to the concert, with a dress rehearsal held at the concert venue close to the concert date. If your child is unable to participate in the concert, please inform the office before rehearsals commence.

Participation in the concerts requires attendance at classes leading up to the concert and at any rehearsals. Students will also need to wear a costume for each dance they participate in. While some costumes are hired, others may be individually made for your child and will need to be purchased. Information on concert requirements is provided in school newsletters and noticeboards.

Individual and group photos are taken on a photo day prior to the end of year concert. A professional DVD recording of this concert and concert photos are made available for purchase by students and parents.

Private Lessons – Half hour private lessons are available with one of our dance teachers. Students generally undertake a private lesson to help them prepare for examinations or eisteddfods. A copy of the MWM Dance Academy Private Lesson Policy is available from the office.

Costume hire – MWM Dance Academy maintains a stock of ballet, jazz and contemporary costumes that can be hired for use in eisteddfods.

Parental Involvement

The Marie Walton Mahon Dance Academy values the support, energy and involvement of the MWM families. Parents are invited to volunteer their talents

and time at concerts and other school related events. If you are interested in becoming a Grade Rep, joining the Rose Walton Memorial Benefit Fund or helping out at one of the school events, please contact the office.

Grade Representatives – Grade Reps are volunteer parents from each grade. Grade Reps pass on communications from the studio to class parents and assist behind the scenes at concerts, rehearsals and exams, by dressing and supervising students.

Rose Walton Memorial Benefit Fund – The Fund is made up of volunteer parents and friends of the MWM Dance Academy, who support the school by fund-raising and attracting donations for the benefit of all students. The Fund consists of an executive committee, which oversees all Fund events. The Fund organises the Scholarship Concert, provides scholarships and awards to students, and organises the purchase of new costumes for groups, including costume hire for grade and character exams.

Open Days – Open Days are held every term for all classes (excluding technical classes), to allow parents, family and friends to come and observe the progression of the students. Open Days are also a good opportunity for prospective students to view the dance classes we offer. Details of dates and times of Open Days are advertised in the MWM newsletters or are available from the office.

Scholarship/End of Year Concerts – Parents are invited to take an active role in supporting MWM Dance Academy events held throughout the year. Assistance is always welcomed with sewing and decorating concert and group costumes, selling raffle tickets and transporting and flooring and equipment to and from concert venues. If you are able to offer your help, please contact the office.

Further Dance Training

Students at the MWM Dance Academy have the opportunity to pursue further studies in ballet at the National College of Dance (NCD). NCD is based at the MWM studios and offers a full time accredited dance course, leading to a Diploma in Dance Performance. Further information on studying at NCD can be obtained by contacting the office on (02) 4952 9294 or by email nc.dance@optusnet.com.au.