



TOBIN
Fine Arts School

9401 Starcrest Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78217
Ph: (210) 483-9100
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www.smhall.org

Saint Mary's Hall **DANCE** *Program*

Dance Handbook 2023-2024



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Dance Program at Saint Mary's Hall

Dance Vision Statement: Saint Mary's Hall is a unique home for students interested in dance. At SMH, students can participate in various dance forms, from ballet to hip-hop. Expert faculty nurture each student and help them learn dance techniques and performance at their maximum potential. Students rehearse and perform for their teachers, fellow students, and family member in Saint Mary's Hall's beautiful dance studios and the Coates-Seeligson Theater.

The Dance Program at Saint Mary's Hall provides students with the opportunity to foster their love of dance; participate in creative expression through movement; develop the kinesthetic skills of strength, endurance, and grace; cultivate pride and confidence in themselves; progress in their discipline of practice; and become part of a unique community of dance artists.

Saint Mary's Hall Dance has a long tradition of excellence and strives to develop an appreciation of dance in every student. Some of our dancers go on to participate in dance while in college and beyond, but all our dancers hold within their hearts a deep love for perfecting their craft with their fellow dance artists, guest artists, and teachers during their time at Saint Mary's Hall.

SMH Dance Program Location: Dance classes and faculty offices are in the Center for Terpsichorean Arts (Dance Building, Building #21) near the Lower School Circle on the Saint Mary's Hall campus.

More Information: The [Saint Mary's Hall Dance Program](#) website contains faculty bios, the class schedule, and additional information. Additional information, including attire requirements, can be found on [the Fine Arts Portal](#) under "Links and Downloads."



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Dance Faculty Contact Information

The Dance Teachers' office in the SMH Dance Building, #2100. All faculty members are available by appointment. Students and parents may contact their dance teacher for questions specific to classes. Production questions may be directed to the Head Choreographer for that particular production. The dance office is not staffed with a receptionist, and dance faculty are often busy in classes. Therefore, if you need immediate assistance, please get in touch with the division offices or the Fine Arts Department at:

Fine Arts Main Number: 210-483-9253

Dance Program Teachers

AJ Abrams, Hip Hop Teacher

Phone: 210-483-9193

Email: aabrams@smhall.org

Yosvani Cortellan, Head Choreographer for Middle and Upper School Ballet Production & Kaleidoscope, Ballet Teacher

Phone: [210-483-9197](tel:210-483-9197)

Email: ycortellan@smhall.org

Yanaylet Lopez-Jorge, Head Choreographer for Montessori Showcase, the Kindergarten & Form 1 Dance Recital, Head Choreographer for Lower School Dance Production, Ballet, and Modern Teacher

Phone: [210-483-9195](tel:210-483-9195)

Email: ylopezjorge@smhall.org

Cenezca Wessolossky, Ballet, Flamenco, and Jazz Teacher

Email: cwessolosskycortellan@smhall.org

Dance Program Administration

Dance Class Registration & Ticketing:

Carrie Avery, Fine Arts Department Coordinator

Phone: 210-483-9144

Email: cavery@smhall.org

General Dance Information:

Bethany Bohall, Director of Fine Arts

Phone: 210-483-9253

Email: bbohall@smhall.org

Registration & Production Fees

Registration Information

- **Class Registration:** Class registration is handled through our online registration system, [UltraCamp](#). Please ensure that the email on the primary contact of your UltraCamp account is checked regularly.
- **Registration fee:** \$30 per dancer per year will be collected when you register for your first paid dance class. Any class that is free of charge will not be billed a registration fee.
- **In-School Pricing:**
 - Lower School in-school classes are free of charge.
 - Middle School Activity Block and Upper School In-School Students are assessed the annual Athletics Fee
- **SMH Dance Academy Classes**
 - \$20 an hour, except for Pas de Deux, which has special pricing.
- **Payments:** Dance families may pay for classes one of two ways:
 1. Paying in full upon registration - if you choose this option, you will receive a 5% discount for paying in full at registration;
 2. Paying monthly – if you choose this option, your payments will draft from your selected method of charge on the 1st of each month, with the final payment being made on May 1st

Class Cancellations and Refunds

- **Minimum Enrollment:** All SMH Dance Academy classes require a minimum enrollment of **four** students. If the minimum is not met, any registered students in that class will receive a full refund.
- **Dropping Classes:** We kindly ask parents to notify the teacher, the [Fine Arts Department Coordinator](#), and their dance teacher if their student is dropping a class.

Production Fee

A \$90 production fee is charged for each performing class to cover the costs of t-shirts, costumes, and other items. Production fees for Saint Mary's Hall students are book-billed.

Dance Productions

Dance Production Information can be found on the Dance Program Schedule under [Links and Downloads](#) on the Fine Arts Portal.

Tickets are available at www.smhall.org/fineartstickets. Generally, tickets go on sale one month before performances. Check [News from the Hall](#) for ticket announcements—for general ticketing inquiries, contact [Carrie Avery](#), Fine Arts Department Coordinator.

Leveling & Age Requirements

Montessori & Kindergarten Dance: Students must be at least four years old by December of the current school year to participate in dance. Dancers must be able to dress/undress in the dance studio with minimal teacher assistance and willingly join in each dance activity. If they do not meet these criteria, each student will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine whether they are ready for Montessori dance classes.

Lower School Dance: For the Lower School Dance Production, each class involved in the performance will have its dance. For example, if your dancer is enrolled in Form 3 In-School Dance and Form 3 Jazz, they will perform in two class dances in the Lower School Dance Production. Certain technique classes, such as the Form 5 Ballet Technique, do not act in productions.

For the **Middle and Upper School Ballet**, each class involved in the dance production will have its dance. For example, if your dancer is enrolled in Upper School In-School Dance and Modern, they will have two class dances. All Form 8 students enrolled in Middle School Activity Block will perform in a featured dance in the ballet production.

The **Senior Piece** is a tradition of Middle and Upper School Contemporary Dance Production Kaleidoscope. The Senior Piece features current Saint Mary's Hall dancers in a spectacular opening number. While most dancers featured in the piece have been performing with SMH Dance for many years, all dancers who participate in the work must be actively enrolled in at least one dance class and have been enrolled in dance at Saint Mary's Hall for their junior year. The Director of Fine Arts may approve rare exceptions to the participation requirements.

Casting

The Tobin Fine Arts School at Saint Mary's Hall relies on our expert instructors to make casting decisions. As in all art forms, an element of subjectivity is to be expected. Students who enroll in dance classes at Saint Mary's Hall are expected to support and accept casting decisions made by the Dance Faculty. All production casting is determined by audition. Qualities evaluated in auditions include:

- Teamwork and support of fellow dancers and teachers
- Consistent demonstration of a positive attitude in and out of the dance studio
- Respect for the art form in themselves and others.
- Focus, dedication, artistry, and commitment to the work of being a dancer.

Lower School Dance Production: All Form 5 students enrolled in In-School dance will receive a lead role/solo in the production, and all Form 5 SMH Academy students, who are not in the in-school program, will be featured in their class dance. All in-school dancers will be featured in the grand finale.

Middle and Upper School Ballet: All Seniors enrolled in both In-School Dance and Intensive Ballet will receive a lead role in the Middle and Upper School Ballet. In addition, all seniors enrolled in SMH Dance Academy classes will receive a featured role. If Upper School students want to audition for a role that requires dancing with a partner, they must be actively enrolled in Intensive Ballet and Pas de Deux.

Jenny's Piece: Upper School students may audition for "Jenny's Piece" in Kaleidoscope. Details will be announced during classes.

Honoring Form 5 and Form 12 Dancers

Below are a few options in which Form 5 and Form Dance parents have traditionally celebrated their dancers. All these activities are **optional**, and participation is **not required** to be a dancer at SMH.

- Decorating the trophy cases with memorabilia and photos of their Form 5 or Form 12 dancer
 - o The cases are usually available production week through Monday following the performance
 - o Parents are responsible for the setup and breakdown of the dancer display. Materials must be picked up by 6 pm on the Monday after the performance due to the cases being used for art exhibitions
 - o A parent representative is requested to contact the [Director of Fine Arts](#) to arrange set up/breakdown
- Decorating the lobby of the theater
 - o The lobby is used to display student artwork from the SMH visual art classes, so any decorations that are put up for the dance production cannot cover or overwhelm the student artwork.
 - o Dance parents may decorate the following areas of the lobby so as not to disturb the student artwork:



- The doors from the lobby to the theater
 - The brick cylinders outside the doors
 - The area around the trophy cases
- o The decorations may be put up on production week through the Monday following the performance
- o Parents are responsible for the setup and breakdown of the lobby decorations. Materials must be picked up by 6 pm on the Monday after the performance due to the lobby being used for art exhibitions
- o A parent representative is requested to contact the [Director of Fine Arts](#) to arrange set up/breakdown
- Reception to celebrate the dancers following a To Be Determined (TBD) evening performance (Flower Ceremony)
 - o The Dance Program will arrange for linens, cookies, and lemonade provided by SAGE Dining
 - o Parents are invited to provide additional food and any décor
 - o Food may be dropped off in the concession area
 - o Fine Arts staff will assist with setting out food items during the performance
 - o Parent volunteers will be responsible for breaking down the reception
- Flower bouquets for Form 5 and Form 12 dancers
 - o Parents are invited to provide flower bouquets for Form 5 and Form 12 dancers. It is recommended that bouquets are all the same; form 5 dancers receive five flowers, and Form 12 students receive twelve flowers.
 - o Parents will arrange for dance students or family members to present the flowers onstage after the Saturday night performances
 - o Parents will communicate with the [Director of Fine Arts](#) about the details of the presentation so that technical staff and dance faculty are aware and can prepare
- Flower bouquets for dance faculty to be presented on stage after a TBD performance
 - o In the past, parents have often provided flower bouquets for dance faculty, but this is optional
 - o Gifts for guest artists and technical/design staff are another option.
 - o If faculty/staff flowers are arranged, parents will need to notify the Director of Fine Arts of the presentation so technical staff is aware and can prepare for lights
- Creating and editing a Form 5 and Form 12 dance video to celebrate the Form 5 and Form 12 dancers and to be shown before the performances
 - o The video will be created by parents or Form 5/Form 12 dancer(s) volunteer
 - o The Form 5/Form 12 parents and students will select and arrange for the video creator/editor
 - o The video should be no longer than 8 minutes in length
 - o Any professional editing services would need to be contracted and paid directly by parents
 - o Form 5/Form 12 parents and students will be invited by the creator/editor to submit images and video
 - o Not all images or videos submitted to the volunteer creator/editor(s) may be included



- o Images and videos should be limited to dance-specific activities and should not include family members, pets, vacations, etc. The focus of the images should be on the dance student in dance and with their dancer friends, classmates, and teachers
- o The volunteer creator/editor(s) has the sole responsibility for the contents of the video
- o The Head Choreographer will review the video for school appropriateness but is not responsible for adding or editing content
- o By participating in the Form 5/Form 12 video project, dance parents and dancers accept that they cannot have final approval on the video project. They acknowledge that they will trust the creator/editor volunteer to pull the project together to the best of their ability

Intensive Ballet Program

The Intensive Ballet Program is for dancers in Forms 1-12 interested in a more rigorous and complete study of dance. Dancers invited to participate in the Intensive Ballet Program have demonstrated a desire and physical and mental ability to study dance more deeply. This program is very demanding and requires more time and commitment. All Intensive Dancers are expected to demonstrate higher levels of discipline, respect, and teamwork and be positive role models in the SMH Dance Program.

Intensive dancers study ballet physically and philosophically, learning the methods and concepts that shape ballet and other studio-based dance techniques. If a dancer was not initially invited to participate in the Intensive Program, it does not mean the student cannot join their Intensive level class later. Students are reconsidered annually for continued participation in Intensive Dance Program.

Intensive Dancers are recommended to take 1) In-School Dance or Middle School Activity Block Dance, 2) a specialized class in ballet (Intensive Ballet), and 3) at least one additional Saint Mary's Hall Dance Academy class.

Additionally, the Dance Faculty teaches variations and repertory classes for Intensive Dancers in Forms 3-12. The variations class aims to begin training the Intensive dancer's repertoire from the ballet canon, building their knowledge of the form and providing them with more performance opportunities throughout the year.

Attendance is a crucial part of developing the necessary skills to excel in our Intensive Dance Program; therefore, attendance is expected at **80% of class sessions**, so please check your schedules before making this commitment.

Pointe Work

Female ballet dancers will start pointe work when their teachers see they are ready. Instructors will begin to evaluate each dancer's readiness and consider candidates for pointe work starting as early as Form 4 Intensive. It is highly recommended that parents have their dancers evaluated by an orthopedist to determine their

strength and readiness for pointe work. By age 12, all dancers that have been dancing ballet at SMH for at least two years and are approved by their ballet teacher are candidates to start pointe work.

Dancers introduced to pointe work will progress depending on their individual development. Warming up for pointe work is extremely important to avoid injuries. Therefore, dancers arriving 15 minutes or later to any pointe class will need permission from the teacher to work *en pointe* for that class. A dancer must attend at most five courses per year of pointe work due to tardiness or absence to be allowed to dance *en pointe* during productions. Establishing a “catch-up” plan for those students will be at the teacher's discretion.

In Lower School, Pre-Pointe and Pointe classes are reserved for those dancers in the Intensive Dance Program.

Class Attendance

Regular class attendance is crucial to the healthy development of a dancer. Missing or being late to classes and rehearsals increases a dancer's risk of being injured and disrupts others in the class. Dancers enrolled in Middle School Activity Block Dance and Upper School In-School Dance; please check your syllabus for specific info regarding productions and rehearsal performance call times. Dance Academy dancers, please refer to the production dance packet. Dancers are expected to attend all rehearsals in preparation for performances. Please get in touch with your teacher if you have any questions or conflicts.

Please remember that as an extra-curricular activity at Saint Mary's Hall, SMH students enrolled in the Dance Program follow the same rules for each division level. Please see the divisional handbook regarding missing school on performance days.

Rehearsals & Performances

- Classes and rehearsals are not open to observers. This is to foster student confidence and focus.
- Performances will be live-streamed and can be accessed and downloaded on the school's [video channel](#).
- Professional SMH Dance Program photographs are available to purchase from [Kemp Davis Photography](#), password SMH.
- For dancers' safety and to foster the best performance experience for our performers, dancers registered for performing classes must participate in all performances and attend mandatory dress rehearsals. Excused absences require approval from the Director of Fine Arts.
- All Lower School dancers will take their costumes home after completing the final performance of the Lower School Dance Production, except in the case of stock tutus.



Saint Mary's Hall Class & End of the Year Awards

Lower School Grade-Level awards will be given out throughout the school year. At the end of the school year, SMH Middle and Upper School awards are given to students that demonstrate superior ability and commitment to dance, a positive and supportive demeanor in and out of the dance studio, and represent the dance program at the highest level.

Dance Classes for Credit

- **Lower School (Forms 1-5):** In-School Dance classes are taken twice during the eight-day rotation in place of PE. Students receive credit for these classes as part of their PE grade.
- **Middle School Activity Block Dance and Upper School In-School Dance: Middle School classes** are held daily during the Activity Block time. Upper School dancers may take In-School Dance for PE or Fine Arts credit, depending on their credit needs determined by their advisor/college counseling.
- **Upper School For-Credit After-School Dance:** Students may register for two after-school for-credit classes. The first class is **Dance: Ballet & Modern**, for students taking after-school ballet and modern. The second class is **Dance as Fitness**. Students taking four hours a week of after-school dance instruction may receive credit for "Dance as Fitness." Both classes are a ½ PE credit per semester. Students taking "Dance as Fitness" and wishing to register for "Dance: Ballet and Modern" must be registered for the four hours of dance outside their regular ballet and modern classes. Pas de Deux may be used towards "Dance as Fitness" hours.
- Upper School students should refer to the division curriculum guide for detailed information on for-credit dance.

Dance Procedures

Lower School

- After-School Lower School dancers will leave their backpacks outside the studio.
- All Montessori/Kindergarten and Lower School dancers will change into and out of their dance attire in the studios supervised by their teacher or another Dance Program faculty member.
- Students are not to be in the studios unless accompanied by their teacher or other Dance Program faculty member and will therefore need to wait for their teacher before changing.
- For classes starting at 4:15 pm or later, the students will change in EC. Any student who is with a parent and not in EC will be expected to come to the Dance Building already dressed.
- Students must immediately enter another dance class, be picked up by a parent or guardian, or attend Extended Care with advance registration.
- A Dance faculty member will stay with the dancers in the dance lobby during the transition between after-school and the first class of the afternoon.
- The school policies of mobile/cell phones "off and away all day" also apply to dance classes and rehearsals.
- Please have all of your student's dance attire (with their names clearly labeled)



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All Dancers

- Dancers should never touch or move other dancers' belongings, costumes/props, or school bags.
- Snacks should be enjoyed in the Dance Lobby and are not allowed in the studios. Dancers should take all their belongings with them once the class is finished.
- There is a refillable water station located between studios one and two.
- All students are expected to treat the lobby, the dressing room, the studios, and the overall facilities respectfully. Dance etiquette is expected at all times.
- All Dancers are expected to model respectful behavior towards their fellow dancers, dance faculty, and facilities in and out of the dance environment.
- **Valuables should be left at home. When students have valuables with them, they should be left with the Administrative Assistant in the Division Office and not brought to the Dance Building. Valuables should never be left in lockers.**

The Saint Mary's Hall Dance Program aims to make dance a safe, productive, and creative place for all students. We look forward to having your student in Dance at Saint Mary's Hall this year and beyond! Please let us know how we can serve you and your family. We hope you have a great year in the SMH Dance Program!