



FEATURE ARTICLES

'Ballet Etiquette': A companion for your summer program



You're set to embark on a summer program, and you've packed your dance shoes, leotards and tights, accessories and excitement. But did you pack your etiquette? How one should behave in a dance classroom may be second nature for some dancers, but other dancers may never have learned that there's a proper way to finish and exit from a center combination, or that there's ideal hand positioning at the barre to accommodate other dancers.

In her own frustrations with dealing with etiquette at a summer intensive, dancer Hannah Bush decided she'd write about it. So, with the help of



Leslie Roy-Heck, the founder of Bunheads® products, Bush wrote *Ballet Etiquette: A Primer and Journal for the Student*. The book is designed to be a companion book for ballet dancers of all ages, with topics including attire, attitude, respecting the barre, spatial awareness, leaving class and more. In addition to the sections on etiquette, the book also contains lined pages for students to keep class notes, corrections, new vocabulary, favorite combinations or thoughts for the day. *Ballet Etiquette* can be easily packed for your summer program or weekend intensive, for easy reference to these helpful tidbits and for a place to jot notes to look back on weeks, even years, from now.

“Etiquette and discipline are lessons that are applicable in all parts of life, not just the classroom,” Bush tells Dance Informa. “As a young dancer, it is crucial to understand and respect the process of the art. Ballet is built on layers; as class progresses, steps are layered with increasing difficulty. You can’t get to the end without starting at the beginning. The younger a dancer is exposed to etiquette, the faster they can progress. It’s the same as teaching children manners. The longer you wait, the harder bad habits are to break.”

For Bush, following her own advice has led to success as a dancer navigating the bustling NYC dance community and in her professional career. She trained at Myers Ballet School and Northeast Ballet in Schenectady, New York, and has attended summer programs at Saratoga Summer Dance Intensive, Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet, Orlando Ballet, Masterworks Festival and the Joffrey Ballet School. She has danced with the Ballet Theatre of Indiana, and has toured the U.S. and Europe.



Hannah Bush. Photo by Kevin Richardson.

“First impressions are significant. How I carry myself in class and behave at auditions can make or break a future opportunity,” Bush reveals. “Living in NYC, I am surrounded in class by professional dancers who I hold at high regard. I can’t take class and expect to earn respect from incredible dancers if I don’t follow basic ballet etiquette. Networking is incredibly important. I view every class not only as an opportunity to refine training but also to meet new dancers, which has led me to jobs.”

In addition, Bush says that journaling has been beneficial throughout her career, as it’s a way to quickly retain new information from teachers, as well as collect memories. She says she already has nearly eight journals filled with her experiences at summer intensives, combinations she doesn’t want to forget and corrections from her training. As a result, she felt it important to include a journaling section in *Ballet Etiquette*.

“As dancers, we are constantly processing new information and exposing ourselves to new styles and teachers,” Bush says. “I encourage all students and teachers to support journaling, as it aids in quickened progression for the student and a higher retention rate. In my own journey as a dancer, as I was learning

new choreography, I would write down the tricky parts. Just the act of writing triggered another part of my brain to work, and it was much easier to pick up later.”



Hannah Bush. Photo by Steve Sanchez.

Bush hopes that *Ballet Etiquette* will become a dance bag “must-have”. She explains, “My hope is that dancers are aware of the importance of discipline. We live in an age when discipline has a negative connotation; people don’t like being told what to do and can find it offensive. There is freedom in discipline, and it’s vital to the development of a successful artist. Ballet etiquette develops character, which matures into art.”

Bush is currently editing her first children's book about a young dancer, which she hopes to turn into a series.

Hannah Bush also guest teaches and gives mini seminars on Ballet Etiquette to dance schools across the U.S. If interested in bringing this to your school, contact her at balletetiquette@gmail.com.

To purchase a copy of Ballet Etiquette, head to www.bplusprintworks.com/ballet-etiquette-journal. And if you'd like to sell Ballet Etiquette at your store or studio, call toll free 844-433-0486 or 518-306-5884, or email balletetiquette@gmail.com.

By Laura Di Orio of **Dance Informa**.