



PROFESSIONAL BALLET TRAINING

Classical roots.
Contemporary minds.

The School of Dance

Where Creativity Finds its Voice

At The School of Dance, your movement becomes your language—a way to tell stories, express ideas, and shape the world around you.

Founded in 1978 by **Merrilee Hodgins** and **Joyce Shietze**, with **Celia Franca** joining as Co-Artistic Director in 1979, **The School of Dance** has become one of Canada's leading centres for professional dance training. Our vision is rooted in excellence, creativity, and community.

Today, with a faculty and staff of more than 80 professionals, we operate year-round from our historic studios on **Crichton Street**—a vibrant home where discovery and discipline meet every day. Students train, create, and perform in an environment that pairs rigorous technique with the freedom to explore.

We offer two Professional Training Programmes: a **three-year post-secondary Contemporary Dance Programme** and a **nine-year Professional Ballet Programme**. Both are intensive and audition-based, designed to prepare artists for sustainable professional careers.

Graduates perform across Canada and internationally. Many also become choreographers, educators, rehearsal directors, and leaders who shape the future of dance.

2026–27 marks **Season 48** of The School of Dance—
a legacy of artistry, community, and vision.



Our Training Philosophy

The School of Dance Professional Ballet Programme is committed to sound principles of dance training rooted in the traditions of classical ballet and contemporary dance, and informed by today's expanded scientific understanding of movement. Our philosophy reflects classical roots and contemporary minds, engaging both the physical and intellectual development of the dancer.

We believe in nurturing technique alongside curiosity and creative inquiry. Students are encouraged to seek, study, witness, and experience the evolving landscape of dance, developing analytical thinking as well as artistic sensitivity. From an early age, dancers are guided to view themselves as committed artists, with a strong sense of their role in society and a responsibility to contribute to the future of the art form.

The programme is led by highly reputable teachers and enriched by the innovative approaches of resident and guest choreographers. We balance artistic experimentation with organizational stability, fostering individuality, expression, and challenge. In performance, we present work that honours ballet's history while responding to contemporary ideas, audiences, and cultural contexts.



The Ballet Programme

The Professional Ballet Programme is a nine-level course of study designed for students aged 8 to 16, with an additional one-year Professional Ballet Studies programme available for graduate students. Training takes place in an atmosphere of professionalism, education, realistic goal-setting, and ongoing mentorship.

The objective of this intensive training is to develop both body and mind—dancers capable of executing all aspects of ballet vocabulary with precision, musicality, and expressive depth. Equal emphasis is placed on technical development, self-discipline, interpersonal skills, and musical understanding. Students are supported through structured stretch and strength training, access to physiotherapy, mental preparedness, and holistic education in nutrition and wellness.

The curriculum is rooted in the Cecchetti Method from Grade 1 through the Maestro Enrico Cecchetti Diploma level. This strong technical tradition is enhanced by the professional expertise of the faculty, ensuring training remains current, rigorous, and adaptable to both classical and contemporary repertoire. Our dancers are recognized for their placement, musicality, and versatility—essential qualities for tomorrow's professional stages.



Curriculum & Performance

The comprehensive curriculum graduates from twice weekly to daily classes and includes ballet, creative movement, music studies, pointe and repertoire, history of dance, somatic work, character and world dance, jazz, and contemporary dance as appropriate to each level. Guest workshops supplement classroom training with focused study in classical repertoire.

Students participate in two theatrical performances each year at major venues including the Theatres of the Canadian Museum of History and the Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre. Additional projects take place at Arts Court and the National Gallery of Canada. Students may also be selected to perform at the National Arts Centre with visiting ballet companies. Senior students have opportunities to perform in outreach initiatives and DanceONTour® projects. Creative process and choreographic exploration are actively encouraged, allowing students to develop and share original work.



Assessment, Pathways & Outcomes

Students receive progress reports twice annually, and continuation in the programme is confirmed through a final assessment class observed by a professional panel. Graduates advance to leading national and international institutions or move directly into professional apprenticeships and company positions.

Our alumni continue their careers with organizations such as the National Ballet of Canada, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Ballet BC, Alberta Ballet, Hong Kong Ballet, Royal Swedish Ballet, De La Dance, and the Royal Ballet of Flanders—carrying forward strong technique, deep respect for tradition, and readiness for the future.



Auditions & Entry

Entrance to the Professional Ballet Programme is by audition. Auditions are held annually in Ottawa, typically in Spring, with additional off-cycle auditions available by request. Candidates are assessed on physical suitability, coordination, flexibility, musicality, and artistic potential.

Out-of-province applicants submit photographs and video materials appropriate to their level and attend the summer programme for further assessment. Auditions are conducted in both English and French.



Why Ottawa. Why Here.

Ottawa is alive with movement. From national stages to local festivals, creativity pulses through the city—and our studios are at the centre of it all. Train in a vibrant hub surrounded by inspiration, connection, and opportunity.

Learn From The Best

Train daily with leading professionals—choreographers, performers, and educators who are shaping the future of dance. Gain technical excellence, hands-on experience, mentorship, and insight into the realities of a professional career in dance.



A Future In Dance

When you join The School of Dance, you join a family of artists. We're inclusive, diverse, and welcoming—a place where every dancer belongs. Our students come from across Canada and around the world, united by a shared love of movement and creativity. Together, we inspire and challenge one another to dream bigger and dance bolder.



Audition For Professional Ballet Training

**TECHNIQUE.
TRADITION.
TOMORROW.**

Classical roots. Contemporary minds.

**START HERE.
AUDITION.**

STEP 1: Contact Fern Villeneuve at
registrar@theschoolofdance.ca / 613-238-7838

STEP 2: Talk with us about your student's age,
background, goals, and interests.

STEP 3: Book an Audition (\$50 fee)

Learn more about our faculty and The School of Dance.
www.theschoolofdance.ca



The School of Dance

A Legacy of Excellence

For more than four decades, The School of Dance has been a place where artists train, teach, and inspire one another.



Merrilee Hodgins, A.R.A.D.
Artistic Director, Co-Founder
National leader in inclusive dance education and creation.

Photo: Simmy Ahluwalia



Mary Ross, Chair, Fellow and Examiner, CC, CICB
Director of Professional Ballet Training

Photo: Caroline Earle

Administration



Fern Villeneuve —
Director of Client
Services and School
Operations

Photo: Nicola Fridgen



Nicola Fridgen —
Assistant to the
Artistic Director and
Student Liaison

Photo: Gilles Vezina

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge operating support from the **Government of Ontario**, the **Ontario Arts Council**, and the **City of Ottawa**.



The School of Dance

MERRILEE HODGINS
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

200 Crichton Street, Ottawa, Ontario
registrar@theschoolofdance.ca
613-238-7838

TECHNIQUE.
TRADITION.
TOMORROW.

Professional Ballet Training



Photos: Ken Bell, Esther Caron, Lois Chan, Lisa Hebert, Bill Juillette, John Nolan, Gilles Vézina.