Vancouver Dance Theatre Handbook

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MEMBERSHIP

Vancouver Dance Theatre (VDT) is a non-profit dance company based in Clark County, Washington and is “dedicated to the encouragement and appreciation of the dance arts in our local community.” Dancers between the ages of 5 and 18, and their families, are encouraged to join VDT to experience the fun and excitement of participating in the Nutcracker! VDT is not affiliated with any school district or dance studio, and all dancers from the Vancouver/Portland metro area are welcome.

Requirements to audition for the Nutcracker:

1. Be a member of the Vancouver Dance Theatre: $35 annual family membership fee.
2. Meet age requirements: must be 5 years old by August 31st (prior to auditions). Dancers are aged 5-18 and must be school age, kindergarten - twelfth grade.
3. Have at least one year of previous ballet training.
4. Currently registered and studying in ballet. Dancers must continue weekly ballet class attendance in addition to participating in the Nutcracker rehearsals and production.

AUDITIONS

Audition Announcements

Audition details, dates, and required forms are posted on our website at www.vancouverdancetheatre.com. Announcements are also shared via:

- Direct emails to returning families
- Social media posts on Facebook and Instagram (@vancouverdancetheatre)
- Local dance studio flyers and community posters

What to Expect on Audition Day

PLEASE NOTE: Because auditioning helps our directors evaluate dancers' individual skill levels and place everyone in the best role, auditions are mandatory for all participants.

1. Check-In & Measurements: Upon arrival, dancers will have a reference photo taken for the Artistic Director and measurements taken for costuming.
2. Warm-Ups & Combinations: Dancers are grouped by age and experience level. They will complete guided stretches, warm-ups, and learn short dance combinations. Some dancers may be requested to stay for the following round of auditioning.

Casting Decisions & Results

Notification

Once finalized, cast lists (typically split into Cast A and Cast B) will be emailed to families and posted on our website. All dancers who audition will receive a part in The Nutcracker.

Placement Criteria

Casting is determined by dancer height/size, technical ability, experience, and stage safety.

- Most dancers receive 1 or 2 roles.
- Party Scene Roles: Because party scene roles require learning complex, multi-dance choreography throughout Act I, dancers cast as a party boy or party girl typically receive only that role and will not be cast in Act II.

Post-Casting Etiquette & Inquiries

Dancers are expected to accept their assigned parts graciously to support the entire production. Minor role adjustments may occasionally occur after rehearsals begin, at the Artistic Director's discretion.

COMMUNICATION POLICY: To respect our Artistic Director's rehearsal and preparation time, please direct all questions, comments, or casting concerns to a VDT Board Member rather than the Artistic Director.

REHEARSALS and COSTUMES

Rehearsal Schedule & Timing

- When: Saturday and Sunday afternoons, starting the first weekend after auditions.
- Frequency: Dancers typically rehearse one day per weekend, though some weekends may require both days. Some roles rehearse both days most weekends.
- Rehearsal Windows: Saturdays (~12:30 PM - 6:30 PM) and Sundays (~1:00 PM - 6:00 PM).
- Session Length: 15 to 90 minutes per session, depending on the role.
- Weekly Schedules: Published every Wednesday by email and posted online at www.vancouverdancetheatre.com.

Holiday Schedule Notice: Rehearsals are typically held on at least one day (and occasionally both days) of Thanksgiving weekend. If your family plans to travel over Thanksgiving, please budget this as one of your dancer's two allowable season absences.

Costume Fittings & Expectations

- Scheduling: Costume fittings take place on rehearsal weekends. We do our best to align fittings with your dancer's scheduled rehearsal time to avoid extra trips, but separate fitting times are sometimes necessary.
- Multiple Fittings: Costumes often require more than one fitting to achieve a proper fit. Fitting schedules are emailed and posted alongside the weekly rehearsal schedule.
- Costume Outlook: Costumes are assigned based on role and available sizing, and they are works-in-progress during fittings. We ask parents to help foster a positive,

encouraging mindset about costumes, keeping in mind that each piece is designed to create a beautiful, cohesive look for the full cast on stage.

Outside Ballet Requirement: Participating in The Nutcracker is a supplemental activity and does not replace regular technique training. To build the strength, skill, and stamina needed for the performance:

- All Dancers: Must be enrolled in and attending ballet classes at least once a week.
- Pointe Dancers: Must attend ballet classes at least 3 days a week.

Class enrollment is verified at the start and middle of the season. Dancers who do not maintain their regular class attendance may be recast or removed from the production.

ATTENDANCE

Because our rehearsal season is only 9 to 10 weeks, consistent attendance is vital for stage safety and choreography polish. Dancers are expected to arrive ten (10) minutes before and stay for the full length of each scheduled rehearsal.

MAXIMUM ALLOWED ABSENCES: 2 DAYS TOTAL FOR THE ENTIRE SEASON
(Includes illness, pre-scheduled absences, and family trips)

Any **two** of the following equal **one (1.0) full absence**:

- Arriving late (tardy) to a rehearsal.
- Leaving a rehearsal early.
- Missing rehearsal for one role (if cast in multiple parts).

Exceeding 2 absences may result in forfeiture of performance roles, at the sole discretion of the VDT Board of Directors.

ILLNESS POLICY

At VDT, our priority is the health and safety of our dancers, families, and community. If your dancer is feeling unwell, please keep them home to rest and prevent the spread of illness.

- Mandatory Absence: Dancers must stay home if they have experienced a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea within the last 24 hours.
- Symptomatic Absence: If a dancer has cold or flu-like symptoms, please keep them home during the initial, most infectious stage of their illness. They may return once symptoms have significantly improved.
- Communication: Please notify VDT immediately if your dancer is ill. Absences due to illness will not count against your dancer, provided we are notified. We will strive to provide recordings of missed rehearsals to help them stay on track.

FINANCIAL and VOLUNTEER COMMITMENTS

To ensure VDT remains operational, all fees must be paid by their respective due dates. All mandatory fees are non-refundable, even in the event of unforeseen cancellations. To support our non-profit mission and ensure a high-quality production for our community, all families participate in our annual fundraising efforts.

Mandatory Fees

- **Annual Family Membership:** $35 per household *(Due: Audition Day)*
- **Production Fee:** $55 per dancer *(Due: First Rehearsal Weekend)*

Fundraising Requirement (Choose One)

- **Participate:** Raise $150 for your first dancer + $75 per additional sibling.
- **Buyout:** Pay a flat $90 buyout fee per dancer by the first rehearsal weekend.

Payment Methods

- At the Studio: Cash or Check only.
- Online: Credit card payments are accepted on the VDT website.

Volunteer Requirements

Vancouver Dance Theatre is a non-profit organization and most of those involved, including the Board of Directors, are working on a volunteer basis. Volunteers are the heartbeat of our show, and we need all of you to make it happen! To ensure every backstage and lobby role is filled safely, **every family must complete:**

- **2 Pre-Production Jobs** (e.g., studio attendance check-in, prop building, silent auction procurement, ornaments).
- **3 Production Jobs** (e.g., dressing room chaperone, flower sales, costume steamer, backstage crew).

COMMUNICATIONS

Everyone is expected to read all information provided including this handbook, fundraising materials, and weekly emails. It is advised that families print out this handbook and VDT calendar for reference throughout the season. Every dancer and their guardians are responsible for the information provided here. If you have a question, please refer to this handbook or our website www.vancouverdancetheatre.com prior to emailing VDT; often the answers to questions are found here or online. If you cannot find the answer, please email VDT using one of the emails provided below.

VDT Board members send emails regarding casting decisions, rehearsal and costume fitting schedules, pre and production jobs and committees, fundraising and fee due dates, and more.

General questions	general@vancouverdancetheatre.com
Financial obligations	treasurer@vancouverdancetheatre.com
Backstage/Props	props@vancouverdancetheatre.com
Ornaments & Pre/Production Signups	ornaments@vancouverdancetheatre.com
Publicity	showprograms@vancouverdancetheatre.com
Silent Auction	secretary@vancouverdancetheatre.com
Ticket Sales	tickets@vancouverdancetheatre.com

SHOW WEEK

Dates

VDT's The Nutcracker typically runs the first full week/ weekend of December. For the official dates in a given year, check our website at vancouverdancetheatre.com.

Tickets

We use an online ticketing system for ticket sales. More information will be available in October via our website and email. We ask that you buy tickets for any show that you are planning to be in the audience for. The performance is our product and the way we raise money to replenish costumes, sets, and rent the space for performances.

Costumes

All costumes are provided by and are the property of Vancouver Dance Theatre. Dancers are responsible for their own practice clothes, tights, ballet slippers, pointe shoes, and "nudies". Under the direction of a Costume Mistress, costumes are made and maintained by Board and parent volunteers.

Dress Rehearsals

Dress rehearsals take place on the Wednesday and Thursday prior to performances and are held at Fort Vancouver High School. Dress rehearsals are mandatory. Younger dancers may be required to stay late for some rehearsals, so consider letting your child's teacher know what is happening. Dress rehearsal schedules will be emailed out. Dancers are expected to arrive on time with FULL hair and makeup completed just as they would for performances.

There will be an area set aside for eating, as no food or drink is allowed in the dressing rooms or in costume at any time.

Pictures/Videos

Performances will be videotaped of both Casts A and B. Parents will receive a link to the videos in January. The cost of this is included in the membership fee. Parents may take pictures of the performance during the dress rehearsals. A professional photographer will possibly be onsite to take candid photos during dress rehearsals. These will be shared out with families in January and are also included in the membership fee.

As part of VDT, it is understood that photographs and/or video recordings may be taken by designated personnel during rehearsals and performances that may include you or your child(ren). Those photographs/videos may be used for promotional purposes and posted on our VDT website or social media accounts.

Cast Party

A cast party for all dancers and volunteers that are working one or both of the Saturday shows is usually held in the school's cafeteria between the Saturday performances.

DANCER PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

- Dancers must be on time for all performances, with hair done and make-up applied.
- Dancers are expected to listen and follow all directions given by room parents and backstage directors.
- Bring books or games for quiet activities in the dressing room.
- Dressing rooms must be kept clean. Dancers are not permitted to touch any classroom items.
- Dancers are not allowed to eat or drink in costumes, but may bring water bottles.
- No food or drink is allowed in the auditorium or dressing rooms.
- Dancers must stay in the dressing rooms during performances.
- Only dancers and assigned parent volunteers are allowed in dressing rooms and backstage.
- Wear shirts and sweaters that button or zip to keep hair and make-up neat.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR DANCER & PARENT/GUARDIANS

At Vancouver Dance Theatre (VDT), we strive for excellence in both performance and community. To ensure a productive and positive experience, all dancers and families agree to the following standards:

Dancer Expectations

- Preparation & Attendance: Arrive at least 10 minutes prior to your scheduled time. Maintain consistent attendance in both VDT rehearsals and your regular technique classes.

- Professionalism: Wear required dance attire (leotard, tights, shoes). Cell phones, gum, and food are prohibited in rehearsal and performance spaces.
- Focus & Effort: Practice choreography regularly to ensure memorization. Use proper studio etiquette and remain attentive during rehearsals.
- Responsibility: Take excellent care of all costumes; families will be billed for any damage or loss.
- Supervision: Dancers must be dropped off and picked up promptly, as supervision is limited outside of rehearsal times.

Family & Guardian Expectations

- Support & Courtesy: Maintain a positive, uplifting attitude toward your dancer. Be polite and respectful in all interactions with VDT members, volunteers, and the Board.
- Communication: Stay informed by reading all emails and handouts promptly. Please respond to communications within 48 hours and attend all required meetings.
- Financial Obligations: All fees and fundraising commitments must be met by the posted deadlines to remain eligible for rehearsals and performances. All mandatory fees are non-refundable.

Maintaining Good Standing

To participate in future auditions and productions, all members (dancers and families) must remain in good standing. This includes meeting all behavioral, communication, and financial obligations as outlined above.

SUPPORTING VDT

There are a multitude of ways to help support VDT during our season, as well as year round. Please consider helping in any way you can! Fundraising and publicity are critical to our success. While a publicity team is handling the press and other advertising, we need everyone's support in spreading the word. Here are some ideas for ways dancers and their families may help:

- Wear your VDT and Nutcracker apparel with pride. Tell everyone that you are a member of the Vancouver Dance Theatre. Invite fellow dancers to join VDT!
- Put performance posters up at your school, a parent's workplace, or in the window of a business in your community. Posters will be available at rehearsals.
- Invite your grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and all your friends, neighbors, and teachers to watch you dance.
- Find and follow us on social media. Feel free to share our posts and announcements on your own social media accounts. Both Facebook and Instagram at vancouverdancetheatre.
- Select VDT as your non-profit of choice on your Fred Meyer account; please note Fred Meyer needs to be updated annually. Community partner donations help greatly with off-season expenses. Please see insert for more details.

CHECKLIST OF EXPECTATIONS

- ☐ Read & print out Handbook BEFORE Auditions
- ☐ Sign Conduct & Handbook Agreement online BEFORE Auditions
- ☐ Fill out Audition Form online BEFORE Auditions
- ☐ Read & sign waiver online BEFORE Auditions
- ☐ Pay Membership and Productions fees online or by check or cash in studio
- ☐ Print out or incorporate VDT Calendar into your planner/phone calendar
- ☐ Read VDT emails and schedules WEEKLY
- ☐ Complete all fundraising or pay the fundraising buyout
- ☐ Sign up for pre-production and production jobs
- ☐ Purchase shoes, tights, leotards, nudies for season/performance if needed
- ☐ Order & Pay for Ornaments