



## **'BACK TO DANCE' NEWSLETTER AND HANDBOOK 2025-2026**

### **WELCOME!**

### **CLASSES BEGIN ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6th 2025**

**WE ARE SO EXCITED TO GET STARTED WITH OUR 23RD SEASON!** We are extremely proud to have created a studio that has strong sense of community, connection and caring, and we know that this year will continue to be filled with happy days of learning and dancing together!

As always, Grace Academy is looking forward to continuing to develop a strong technical foundation in each of our dancers, while instilling a natural love of movement and creativity. At Grace Academy, we are proud to offer the finest in dance and theatrical training, where students are given the opportunity to learn in an environment of artistic and technical excellence. As one of Oakville's only non-competitive studios, we are proud to offer an environment that is caring, and where dancers learn to be encouraging, supportive and respectful of each other. Age appropriate syllabus work, music and costuming is chosen with great care so that parents can always be assured of the very best for their child!

All that we do at Grace Academy is guided by the following values:

- G - generosity of time, talents and effort
- R - respect for ourselves and others
- A- accountability for our actions and our words
- C - connection and caring
- E- enthusiasm for learning and creativity

## **VISIT US!**

If you are new to Grace Academy and want to drop by for a visit, we will be at the studio on August 19th, 20th and 21st from Noon -1pm. We are also available to meet by appointment the week of August 11th.

**For our little ones (Discover Ballet, Pre-Primary Ballet and Movers and Groovers), we will be emailing you separately to sign up for a 'meet and greet' session.** This will give you an opportunity to see the studio, meet your teacher, and have your little one feel comfortable before the 1st day. Watch your email in the coming weeks to sign up for a time slot.

Information on drop off/pick up procedures will follow closer to the first day for all classes.

## **FAMILY PORTAL/COMMUNICATION**

The 'Family Portal' will be your place to look for monthly newsletters, class music, zoom links and fees owing as we continue through the year. Access will be through the homepage of our studio website ([graceacademy.ca](http://graceacademy.ca)). Please sign in using the email that you used to register your dancer, and be sure to record your password.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Academy at any time with any questions or concerns that you may have. Good communication between Grace Academy and all of our dancing families is extremely important to us. Monthly newsletters/updates will be emailed and posted in your family portal on a regular basis to keep everyone up to date – please take the time to read these carefully. Newsletters will also be posted regularly on our website [www.graceacademy.ca](http://www.graceacademy.ca) on the Latest News page.

**If you would like additional family members (senior students/parent/grandparent) to receive our email communications, please add them to your family portal.**

**Click Account - Account Settings - Family Contacts**

**Add all details**

**PLEASE use our email ([graceacademy@sympatico.ca](mailto:graceacademy@sympatico.ca)) and phone number, (905 338-0210) to communicate with us for all questions and information that you need us to be aware of (illness, missed classes) . PLEASE DO NOT text or message teachers on social media for studio communication.** This ensures streamlined and efficient communication channels, allowing us to address your inquiries and concerns promptly. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

During class time Miss Knapp carries her cell phone with her so that she may contact parents if a child is ill. If you need to reach your dancer (or their teacher) in an emergency you may call this number **(905) 301- 9409**. Please do not use it to contact the school on a regular basis as it will interrupt class time. Messages can be left at the Academy's regular number **(905) 338 – 0210**.

Please remember to have a look at (and like!) our Facebook and Instagram pages. You will be able to find our page under Grace Academy of Dance and Performing Arts (facebook) and @graceacademyofdance (instagram). We will share Grace Academy news and important reminders throughout the year and, it will be your first place to look in case of a "snow day"!

## **TIMETABLE**

The proposed timetable for the 2025/2026 season can be found on our website under 'Schedules'. This timetable is subject to change based on registration numbers. Where there is insufficient registration for any class, this may be cancelled and an alternative given.

Students will be watched carefully to ensure that they have been placed in the correct level. By carefully considering various factors, such as technical proficiency, skill development, and personal growth, we aim to provide a class placement that fosters confidence, progress, and enjoyment. Our commitment is to offer a program that supports individual needs and encourages students to reach new heights in their dance journey. We understand that each student is unique, and our placement process reflects this understanding.

## **AGE REQUIREMENTS**

**Discover with me** - 18 months by September 1st 2025

**Ballet** – 3 years by September 1st 2025

**Movers and Groovers** - for 4 year olds with 1 year of dance or 5 year olds new to dance - combo class of jazz/hip hop and tap

**Tap**– 5 years by September 1st 2025 - Primary Tap is appropriate for dancers ages 5-7 who have taken either Pre-Primary Ballet, Movers and Groovers, Primary 1st Year Ballet or Primary Modern Jazz - or 7 year olds new to dance.

**Musical Theatre** – 8 years by September 1st 2025

All students must be taking one form of dance. Dancers will be divided based on age and dance level

**Modern jazz** – 6 years by January 31ST 2026 OR 1 Year of Pre-Primary Ballet or Movers and Groovers at Grace Academy (primary and grade 1 modern jazz will also have a taste of hip hop appropriate to this age level)

**Junior Hip Hop Level 1** - 8 years old OR enrolled in Grade 2 Modern

ALL STUDENTS wishing to enrol in Grade 4 Hip Hop or higher MUST also be attending the corresponding modern class.

Intermediate foundation ballet 1st year students must attend 2 classes of ballet per week in order to be considered for pointe work.

Intermediate foundation ballet 2nd year students and above MUST be attending 2 regular ballet classes per week to work on pointe.

**We highly recommend that students in grade 1 ballet 2nd year and above attend 2 classes per week in order to progress through the level in 1 year and achieve a good standard of work**

Musical theatre students must be taking at least one form of dance

Those interested in The Spirit Moves Christian Dance Company or Pure Grace Performing Company should speak to Miss Knapp

Hip Hop Tricks and Technique - open to dancers enrolled in ADV 1 HIP HOP AND ABOVE - check for correct level

**(For more information on what the various styles and levels offer, please email us at [graceacademy@sympatico.ca](mailto:graceacademy@sympatico.ca))**

## **PERFORMING COMPANIES**

We offer a variety of performing companies for our dancers to participate in during the year. We are always looking for new opportunities for our dancers to showcase their work. If you are looking for entertainment for an event, please let us know and we will try to accommodate your request!

### **THE SPIRIT MOVES CHRISTIAN DANCE COMPANY**

This is a fabulous opportunity for your dancer to learn about giving back to others and to share their talents in a way that brings joy to those around them.

The Spirit Moves Christian Dance Company was founded by Miss Knapp in the year 2000. Using contemporary Christian worship music, dancers learn a large repertoire of choreography throughout the year. In our 2025/2026, practices will continue to be held every other Friday.

Dancers take part in a variety of worship services within the community during the year and hold a fundraising spring concert to raise money for local charities.

Families who participate in this program will be updated on scheduled performances for the year during the summer. All performance participation will be optional.

Open to dancers ages 8-17 who are enrolled in at least one other dance class per week.

### **MUSICAL THEATRE - FROM PAGE TO STAGE!**

This past year, we changed the focus of our musical theatre class to give our dancers the opportunity to work towards a Broadway review style performance. It was a huge success and we were thrilled to watch our students performing on stage in March. We witnessed tremendous growth in confidence, maturity and stage presence in each student! We are excited to continue the program in the same format in our next season.

Each class will be a rehearsal towards a live performance in early March (date to be confirmed, aiming for March 1-3). Dancers will have the opportunity to sing, act and dance in both large and small groups, as well as the possibility of duets or solos (in both song and dance!). The theme for this year will be "From Page to Stage" - a celebration of some of the incredible musicals that are based on our favourite books. We will explore songs from shows such as SHREK, MATILDA, WIZARD OF OZ/WICKED, JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLLOUR DREAMCOAT AND HARRY POTTER AND THE CURSED CHILD - just to name a few! We can't wait to explore new material and watch everyone shine on stage!

**This class is open to dancers ages 8-17 who are enrolled in at least one other dance class per week. Dancers will be divided according to age and experience.**

(As with Pure Grace, we will aim to re-use costumes from previous years or make use of items that dancers have at home, however, some additional cost may be required - class time will also lengthen by 1/2 hour in the winter term)

## PURE GRACE

Pure Grace is a non-competitive performance based company. It is a wonderful way for dancers to enhance their performance skills, while increasing their technique and knowledge of a variety of dance styles.

Pure Grace is offered to the **serious dancer, who is committed to challenging themselves with new work, enhancing their technique, and performing at a high standard.** While this is a non-auditioned group, dancers should ideally attend a minimum of 2 ballet classes and 1 modern class per week in order to participate. The group is open to dancers enrolled in grade 3 ballet and above, and will be sub-divided according to dance grade level. Dancers in Grade 3 and 4 Ballet will rehearse on Tuesdays evenings and all others will rehearse on Thursday evenings. Some additional practices are scheduled on weekends, when/if needed for a performance.

In past years, our dancers have participated in events such as the CIBC Run for the Cure, Oak Park Neighbourhood Fall Fair, Oakville Children's Festival, Fundraising Galas for Kerr Street Mission and Halton Women's Place, Film.Ca Cinemas, Palermo Village Retirement Community and Disney World!

We look forward to finding new performance opportunities for our dancers this coming season! Participating families will be updated on our performance schedule during the summer.

We are so proud of what our dancers have accomplished by being a part of this program and see an enormous change in them both technically and in performance standard.

Note - for many of our performances, costumes are used from previous seasons or borrowed by the dancers, however, **an additional cost for costuming may be required throughout the year.** As always, we aim to keep costs to a minimum.

**Space will be limited. If your dancer is interested and they have not participated before, please speak to Miss Knapp to receive further details!**

## 785

This exciting hip hop crew had a very successful second season this year, and once again took part in the Stomp Urban Dance Competition and Showcase on stage at Meridian Hall in Toronto!

Dancers who have shown hard work, consistency, and a flair for this style during the past year, and who we feel will most benefit from this program, will be invited to participate in the fall of 2025. This team will focus both on performance and training, to gain a greater understanding of the hip hop culture and street styles. A rehearsal schedule will be provided to all those invited to participate.

**Further details have been sent out to those students who are being invited to participate for the fall term. If your dancer is interested and would like more information, please reach out to us, and we can discuss this further.**

### **PROGRAMMING FOR OUR LITTLE ONES**

We take great pride in offering programs for our littlest dancers that allow them to explore their creativity and imagination, develop an appreciation of music , and enhance their motor skills and body and spatial awareness.

In addition to our Discover Ballet, Pre-Primary Ballet and Movers and Groovers classes, we also offer a class for little ones to take with a grown up!

**DISCOVER WITH ME** is a program for the little dancer and a grown up to enjoy together. This class is geared to age 2, but is also appropriate for dancers ages 18 months to 3 years who may need the extra security of having an adult with them. We will dance, sing, and play in both one-on-one activities and group activities. Through circle songs, open exploration, and gross motor development exercises, children will blossom with each passing class as they grow with their caregiver during this precious time together!

If you know a little one, please let them know about these fantastic programs!

Our MOVERS AND GROOVERS CLASS has a new format this year! This fast paced class will continue to feature a conceptual approach to creative movement, using colourful props and imaginative music. But, new this year, it will now be an hour long 'combo' class where dancers will have the chance to develop new skills in jazz/hip hop and tap! Open to 4 year olds who have taken Discover Ballet, or 5 year olds new to dance!

### **ADULT CLASSES!**

Have you always wanted to try a dance class? Did you dance as a child and miss the joy that it brings? Are you looking for a fun way to exercise? JOIN ONE OF OUR ADULT CLASSES!!

We offer classes at the following times:

MONDAY 9PM TAP (for those with past tap experience)

WEDNESDAY 8:45PM JAZZ /HIP HOP (beginners are welcome but also for those with past experience )

THURSDAY 9:15AM BALLET (appropriate for all levels of experience!)

THURSDAY 10:15AM TAP ( for beginners or those with less experience)

FRIDAY 9:15AM STRETCH AND TONE WITH JAZZ (for all levels)

## **FACULTY**

**Heidi Knapp** is a Fellow and past examiner with the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing. She holds qualifications that specialize in Classical Ballet, Modern Theatre Dance and Tap, as well as intermediate training in National Dance. In addition to this, she holds a B.A. in Drama with a specialization in Stage Management and has completed the Foundations Course with DiscoverDance for Early Childhood Dance Educators. She is a proud member of Rhee Gold's Studio Owner Alliance.

Heidi is a firm believer that dance should be experienced by everyone. Her teaching experience of more than 34 years covers work in dance, drama and musical theatre with dancers aged 18 months to 85!

Heidi is the Director of the Spirit Moves Christian Dance Company, for which she was nominated for the Oakville Community Spirit Awards in 2005. She also teaches dance to seniors and is the choreographer for The Oakville Happy Tappers.

In November of 2017, Heidi received the Canada 150 Sesquicentennial Citizenship Award for engaging and inspiring youth in the community. She has also been nominated as Entrepreneur of the Year and Small Business of the Year in the Oakville Awards for Business Excellence.

Heidi takes pride in offering dance to all ages and fostering creativity, a strong work ethic, integrity and a sense of community in all of her students.

## **Sarah Vanduyvenvoorde**

Grace Academy is very fortunate to have Sarah VanDuyvenvoorde on staff. She has been teaching modern, jazz, hip hop, tap and ballet for more than 30 years

and is an Associate of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing. Sarah also holds advanced certificates in ballet, modern, tap and national dance. For those of you new to the school – our dancers call Sarah “Mrs. Van Dunk” – a combination of her maiden and married name- and much easier to pronounce! Sarah brings creativity, energy and a genuine love of children to all of her classes! She is dedicated to excellence, and has been an important member of our faculty since we opened!

### **Ali Daly**

A graduate of Grace Academy, Ali Daly returned to join our faculty in 2017. Ali is a Ryerson University graduate with a B.A in Creative Industries. She specializes in hip hop dance and has trained with various projects in Toronto including: O.I.P Dance Company, Professional division at BOSS Dance Company and The Clique Dance Crew. Ali has performed in Toronto showcases including: Fever After Dark, The Industry Season 2, Choreoball, The Dance Teacher Expo, Bazaar, The Beatdown, G.O.A.T Dance Competition and many more. She currently works at the creative studios “All time Artist Co” and “Somewhereelse” as a digital content creator while continuing to be an advocate for the Toronto dance community.

### **Meredith Busteed**

Meredith is a Musical Theatre performer and teaching artist; she is also the Co-Creator and Artistic Director of Young Artists’ Theatre in Burlington. Meredith is a proud graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, with a Masters in Music Theatre. She also holds a B.A. in Drama from Queen’s University and has earned advanced certificates in Tap, Ballet, and Modern. Meredith has performed professionally throughout southwestern Ontario, as well as in Scotland and the United Kingdom. She has also worked as a producer and musical theatre choreographer, but her greatest love is teaching and helping students find their voice, and grow in confidence, all within a supportive community.

### **Natasha Wandel**

We are thrilled to be welcoming back Natasha to Grace Academy after a year working as a neurologic music therapist at the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in Boston. This fall she will begin a new position at Baycrest Hospital in Toronto, which will allow her time to return to work with our musical theatre students! Natasha is a graduate of Grace Academy and has trained in all dance styles to an advanced level. She holds a Masters in Applied Music and Health, and brings extensive knowledge and vocal experience to her teaching, along with an incredible sense of fun!

## **TERM DATES/HOLIDAYS**

AUTUMN TERM: SEPTEMBER 6TH - NOVEMBER 24TH 2025

WINTER TERM: NOVEMBER 25TH 2025 - MARCH 1ST 2026

SPRING TERM: MARCH 2ND - JUNE 1st 2026

### **No classes will be held during the following holidays:**

Saturday, October 11th, Sunday, October 12th and Monday October 13th  
(Thanksgiving)

Friday, October 31st (Halloween)

Tuesday, December 9th (Performing Company Christmas performance at the Oakville Centre- we invite all to attend - details to follow)

Monday, December 15th- Sunday, January 4th (Christmas Break)

Friday, February 13th, Saturday, February 14th, Sunday, February 15th and Monday February 16th (Family Day Weekend)

Saturday, March 14th - Sunday, March 22nd inclusive (March break)

Friday, April 3rd - Good Friday

**CLASSES WILL RUN ON THE SATURDAY and MONDAY OF EASTER WEEKEND, AS WELL AS ON MAY LONG WEEKEND (May 16th-18th) AS USUAL.**

**In studio community building events and theme months will continue as in past years. Please watch for updates in your monthly newsletters!**

**\*\*ALL HOLIDAY DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE \*\***

## **UNIFORMS**

Each style/level of dance has a uniform that is required for class. This allows the dancers and teachers to focus on the body alignment and technique needed to learn, eliminates distractions, and creates a special sense of occasion. Please refer to the attached list for the correct uniform. **We ask that you check this list carefully.**

All uniforms, including shoes can be purchased from INSTEP ACTIVEWEAR in Oakville (905) 844-4415/www.instepactivewear.com . Please contact the Academy if you have any questions. **NOT ALL ITEMS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE- PLEASE CALL OR VISIT THE STORE.**

Students should attend class in the appropriate uniform with their hair neatly off the face. **Buns** are required from grade 1 ballet onwards; pony tails are appropriate for other subjects. No jewellery is to be worn to class. Older dancers should choose appropriate undergarments to wear under their bodysuits. **Proper grooming is an important part of each dancer's training and shows respect for the art of dance. PLEASE ENSURE THAT UNIFORM IS CLEAN AND IN GOOD REPAIR (NO RIPPED TIGHTS!)**

**HIP HOP DANCERS** - Please make special note of the attached uniform list! In past years, we found that throughout the year, dancers gradually started coming in outfits that were not appropriate for class. While this uniform is more casual, it is important to take note of the requirements!

Dance shoes are meant for the dance floor only and should never be worn outside. This helps maintain their condition and ensures a safe and optimal dancing experience for all students.

**Dancers who have ballet and modern or tap classes that run back to back should wear convertible ballet tights for their modern/tap class (in place of black tights). DANCERS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CHANGE FULL UNIFORMS BETWEEN CLASSES, BUT CAN CHANGE SHOES/REMOVE SKIRTS AS NEEDED**

### **GRACE ACADEMY DANCEWEAR!**

Grace Academy jackets, t-shirts and sweatpants will once again be available for purchase this year! Look for more information to follow by email and on social media - **we will be ordering in mid September (usual delivery time is 6-8 weeks)**

### **STUDENT VOLUNTEERS**

We are always grateful for the help of our older students in the little ones' classes each year!

If your dancer is age 12 or older and would like to assist in some way, please have them email Miss Knapp with their availability. A schedule will be set in mid-August.

Thank you in advance!

## **RUN FOR THE CURE -SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5th**

We are so happy to once again take part in the **CIBC RUN FOR THE CURE**, to raise funds to help fight breast cancer.

We would like to invite you to join us and to be a part of our team - **WALK WITH GRACE!** All family members are welcome to join us and we are hoping for a large group of family and friends to walk/run together!! You may choose to do 1K or 5K – a lot of our group choose to walk, rather than run, and enjoy the company of our Grace Academy family :) -but you may choose to run too!

Our performing company, Pure Grace, will also be dancing as part of the opening ceremonies!

If you would like to join our team, please go to [www.runfortheure.com](http://www.runfortheure.com). You can find our location (Burlington/Hamilton/Oakville) and then click JOIN A TEAM - we are WALK WITH GRACE.

If you cannot join us, but would like to make a donation, this can be done online or directly through Miss Knapp!

Thank you for considering this opportunity to give back to our community!

## **ABSENCES**

Parents are asked to inform the studio if their dancer is absent for any reason. This is particularly important if their dancer falls ill for any reason.

**Please remember that regular attendance is extremely beneficial to all dancers, allowing them to feel comfortable and perform at their highest level in a safe manner. It also develops team work and a sense of community.**

## **YEAR END PERFORMANCE - May 24th to May 30th 2026**

Our year end performance is always the most exciting time of year for the dancers. Grace Academy prides itself on presenting a high quality, professional performance each year and feels that this is an extremely important part of our dancers' training! Dance is a performance art and our year end production gives our students the opportunity to perform on a professional stage in a positive and educational atmosphere. Being a part of our production instills self confidence, responsibility, self discipline, co-operation and team work in all of our students. Dancers will also learn about theatre etiquette and various aspects of what goes

on 'behind the scenes' to create a production. And – it is a lot of fun and creates memories that will last a lifetime!

**PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR MAY 24th- May 30th 2026!**

**Details and more information will follow once our year begins.**

### **GRADUATES 2025**

This year we were sad to say good-bye to 12 graduates - most of whom have been with us since they were 3 and 4 years old! These dancers have truly been a dream group of seniors. They have an amazing sense of fun, and they are such excellent examples of how to work hard, lead with kindness and embrace everything with enthusiasm. Please join us in congratulating:

BREANNA SHORNEY

SOPHIE HOLLINRAKE

RAYLA WARE

KATE EASTWOOD

SARA MACGREGOR

LEAH BERGER

REGAN LILLY

RILEY SHEPHERD

EVELYNN ROUGIER

CADENCE MONTGOMERY

SIENNA AVERY

KAYLA STRIKE

### **LEAH BATTISTA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP**

In November of 2017, we were extremely sad to have one of our Grace Alumni pass away suddenly after suffering a pulmonary embolism. In her honour, we established The Leah Battista Memorial Scholarship. This yearly award is presented to the dancer who most embodies Leah's passion, energy, joy of

dance and hard work, and is to be used towards the cost of their dance training, or if presented to a grade 12 student, towards their post-secondary education. This year, we were very proud to present this award to 3 dancers - **BETH KELLY, KRISTIN BEADMAN AND MICHELLE SMITH!**

### **JENNIFER HOWSE COMMUNITY OF GRACE AWARD**

In the summer of 2022, the studio lost one of our biggest cheerleaders and friends with the passing of one of our dance moms. Jennifer Howse was fully invested in our studio culture. She understood the importance of community and supported everything that we do here with enthusiasm. She was a big behind the scenes volunteer and was there to support everyone. She made others feel important, valued and welcome, and she made our studio a better place. In Jen's memory the JENNIFER HOWSE COMMUNITY OF GRACE award was established. This award is given out each year to someone (dancer, parent, friend) who has gone above and beyond to support our dance community. **This year, Mrs. VanDunk was honoured with his award, for her huge contribution to all things 'grace' and for always being ready and willing to take on any job - big or small.**

### **ALLERGIES/WELL BEING**

We kindly request that you communicate any existing medical conditions, allergies, learning differences or mental health concerns that your child may have at the time of registration and/or throughout the school year. This information is vital for our teachers to provide the best possible support and create an inclusive dance experience for all students. Please be assured that all medical information shared with us is treated with the utmost confidentiality. We respect your privacy and understand the importance of maintaining sensitive personal information in a secure and professional manner.

**Grace Academy strives to be a nut free environment. Please note that we do have dancers with severe nut allergies When sending snacks with dancers who have 2 classes in a row please do not send nut products.**

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

Grace Academy is proud to have had students and families who have shown kindness and respect for others at all times and is confident that this will continue in the coming year! We recognize and appreciate the support of our families and are committed to promoting an atmosphere of positivity and caring in all that we do. Please take time to review all waivers within your portal, as well as our policies on emergency regulations.

## **PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS WAIVER**

From time to time, we publish photographs of our dancers (on our website and in our advertising, on our Facebook/Instagram page or on our bulletin board). Upon registering, you will have completed a waiver to allow us to use photos of your dancer. Names will never be used without additional permission. If you prefer not to have photos published, once you have set up your parent portal, please select the 'opt out' option.

WE WELCOME YOU TO A WONDERFUL YEAR AHEAD!

**\*\*Did you read this whole handbook? We know it is long!! If you made it to the end, send us an email and your name will be entered into a draw to win an AMAZON gift card!!! You must email us by August 7th! \*\***

