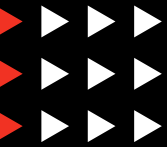


BALLET ETUDES

SINCE 1986



2026/2027

**Ballet Etudes Company
HANDBOOK**



WELCOME



Sharon Seder Meko
Founding Director

We are thrilled to welcome you to a new season with Ballet Etudes! Whether this is your first year as a company member or you've grown up in our wings, we are honored to have you as part of this remarkable legacy of artistry, discipline, and dedication.

When I founded Ballet Etudes in 1986, I had no idea that the small performing group I envisioned would evolve into one of Arizona's most respected and beloved ballet companies. What began as a group of young dancers performing in local community venues has flourished into a pre-professional company known for its full-length productions, rigorous standards, and commitment to classical excellence. Now, nearly four decades later, my vision continues to thrive through the hard work and passion of dancers like you.

This handbook is your guide to the year ahead. Inside, you'll find important information to help you navigate company life, understand expectations, and make the most of your time with us. Please take time to review these materials, and know that our staff and leadership team are always here to support you and your family.

Thank you for being part of Ballet Etudes. Together, we'll continue to honor our rich history while stepping boldly into the future—one rehearsal, one performance, one dancer at a time.

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink, likely belonging to Sharon Seder Meko. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

KEY INFORMATION

Key Contact Information

Mailing Address: 1455 S Stapley Drive in Mesa

Telephone Number: (480) 558-2080

Tuition/Payment: office@balletetudes.net

Aliece: admin@balletetudes.net

Kellan: info@balletetudes.net

Website: balletetudes.net

Key Event Dates*

2026

9/11 Nutcracker rehearsals begin

9/30 Rehearsal with The Phoenix Symphony (TPS)

10/6 TPS show at Symphony Hall

10/9-10/10 No Nutcracker rehearsal (Fall break)

11/10 TPS show at Symphony Hall

11/21 Nutcracker Sweet Tea

11/27-12/20 Nutcracker theater rehearsals/shows

12/4 Nutcracker School Show (Act 2 only)

2027

1/12 TPS show at Symphony Hall

3/12-3/13 No spring show rehearsals (Spring Break)

4/14 Appearance with Symphony of the Southwest

4/23-4/25 Spring theater rehearsals & shows (rep TBD)

6/7 Showcase (Rehearsal and Performance)

TBD Appearances with live orchestras

TBD Spring show auditions

TBD Company photo shoot

**The dates above may change due to forces outside our control.
Additional events may be added throughout the season. Not all company
members may be utilized for every event. We appreciate your flexibility!*

WE ARE A 501(C)3



Ballet Etudes is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization; there is no owner, but instead we are governed by an appointed Board of Directors. While other studios in the Valley have owners who reap profits, our studio has no such owner, but rather a supportive group of parents and friends who ask for nothing in return and believe in the mission of our studio and company.

OUR STORY

In 1986, families of Sharon Seder Meko's ballet students were so inspired by the growth and progress they saw in their children that they approached her with a request: opportunities to perform. Sharon responded by organizing community performances throughout the Phoenix Valley, and before long, the idea of forming a company took root. Ballet Etudes—named after the French term meaning “the study of ballet”—was born,

becoming the first company of its kind in the area. Sharon's husband, Bob Meko, gathered a dedicated group of parents to establish a board of directors and lay the foundation for a strong support network of parents and volunteers.

Thanks to the vision of Sharon and Bob Meko, the commitment of our families, and the talent of our dancers, Ballet Etudes has continued to thrive—upholding a proud legacy of excellence in training and performance.

April 17, 1986

Dear Supporter of Ballet,

The ballet company, Ballet Etudes, is holding an informational and organizational meeting for all interested persons on Friday, April 25, at 7:00 P.M. We will be meeting at the law office of J. Lamar Shelley at 48 North MacDonald Street, in Mesa.

The company is presently comprised of dances from Jeanne's School of Dance. The purpose of this meeting is to:

1. Discuss the scope of the company
2. form an organizational structure
3. elect a board of directors.

Your attendance at this meeting does not necessitate your holding an office. Only, your input is desired.

Please plan on attending this important meeting. Your opinions/participation is valued.

Sincerely,

G. Robert Meko

OUR COMPANY MEMBERS



Being a company member of Ballet Etudes is both a privilege and a challenge. Company life demands commitment, responsibility, and perseverance. Long rehearsals, high expectations, and the pursuit of excellence are all part of the experience. With that hard work come moments of joy, growth, and unforgettable achievement—from the magic of opening night to the deep bonds formed with fellow dancers and the pride of knowing you’ve pushed yourself beyond what you thought possible.

OUR PARENTS



Parents are an essential part of the Ballet Etudes company community. Behind every dedicated dancer is a parent or guardian who supports them through long rehearsal days, tech weeks, and countless hours of training. From driving to and from the studio to helping with buns and tights, parents are the quiet force that helps make the company’s success possible.

Beyond day-to-day support, Ballet Etudes parents are also expected to be involved in volunteer efforts that bring our productions to life. Whether helping backstage, sewing costumes, assisting with makeup, or chaperoning our younger company members, your time, energy, and enthusiasm create the foundation for everything we do. We are endlessly grateful for the partnership and passion of our company families—because when a dancer joins Ballet Etudes, their whole family becomes part of the legacy.

STAYING INFORMED



NEWSLETTERS

We strive to make the Ballet Etudes company membership organized and enjoyable for everyone involved. To keep you well-informed, please read all newsletter updates carefully. Company newsletters are sent separately from the studio newsletters and important updates will be emailed to you. Sometimes urgent requests are sent via emails (for last minute news appearances, etc.) so we do ask that you check your email regularly.

CONTACTING US

At Ballet Etudes, we are committed to maintaining clear communication with our company families. To help ensure your questions are directed to the right place and receive a timely response, please use the appropriate contact below.

To help us respond as efficiently as possible, we kindly ask that you avoid using social media platforms for company-related communication. Email is always the best way to reach us!

- **Fees & Payments (Tracey):** office@balletetudes.net
 - **Aliece:** admin@balletetudes.net
 - **Kellan:** info@balletetudes.net
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UNDERSTANDING THE COMPANY



Do's and Don'ts

It's natural for parents and students to draw inspiration from others, but let's focus on personal growth rather than making negative comparisons. Celebrate achievements and avoid speaking negatively about teachers, fellow students, or other parents. While disappointment is a natural emotion, it's important that all responses remain respectful and constructive—negative attitudes or behaviors will not be tolerated.

Casting

Casting for each performance or production is determined on a season-by-season basis and depends on a variety of factors, including the number of company members, the specific ballet being presented, and the unique artistic needs of the production. Because each season is different as well as the layout of each company roster, we ask that dancers and families avoid comparing to previous years when anticipating casting decisions. Every production is a fresh opportunity, and roles are thoughtfully assigned to best serve the artistic vision and the development of each dancer. The Artistic Staff reserves the right to adjust casting at any time based on factors such as rehearsal attendance, class attendance, individual progress, and overall company needs.

Progression of Casting / Company

It's important to understand that not every dancer will advance to the next company level each year. In fact, it is common—and often necessary—for dancers to spend multiple years in the same level to build the strength, discipline, and experience that each new level demands. This is not a reflection of a dancer's worth or potential but rather a part of the natural progression of serious ballet training.

While we wish that every dancer gets their time in the spotlight, not every dancer will be cast as a principal in company or in a soloist role in performances. Casting is a thoughtful and complex process that considers many factors including technical ability, artistic maturity, work ethic, stage presence, and rehearsal preparedness. Every role, whether in the corps de ballet or as a featured soloist, contributes meaningfully to the story and the success of the production.

UNDERSTANDING THE COMPANY

Spring Performance Selections

The full-length spring production is typically selected early in the season, once the company roster has been finalized. Each ballet presents unique artistic and casting requirements—such as the number of corps de ballet roles or opportunities for upper-level dancers—so it is important for us to fully understand the makeup of the company before announcing the season's production. This approach allows us to choose a work that best showcases our dancers' strengths while upholding the artistic integrity of the performance.

Casting Additional Appearances

When additional performance opportunities arise—such as collaborations with The Phoenix Symphony, lecture demonstrations, or special events—casting is determined by the same factors used for our mainstage productions, including dancer readiness, role requirements, and artistic vision.

Additional considerations may include dancer availability, class attendance, rehearsal timelines, music selection, and the choreographer's specific casting needs. While these opportunities are an exciting extension of the Ballet Etudes experience, please note that not all company members will be cast in every external performance.

NUTRITION FOR DANCERS

Via the Children's Hospital of Colorado

Dance is a demanding activity that uses intermittent bursts of anaerobic energy – an activity that's short in length with high intensity – to create artistic movements. Compared to traditional team sports, the artistic and athletic nature of dance makes it not only a unique sport, but one that requires proper nutrition. Below, sports medicine experts highlight the importance of proper nutrition for dance athletes to achieve their best health and performance.

Dance nutrition and energy intake

Food serves a dancer's body as a source of fuel and enjoyment. Eating enough of each food group throughout the day leads to proper energy intake for performance, growth and development. Research shows that dancers tend to have low energy intake — around 70% to 80% of their expected nutritional needs, which can lead to:

- Lower metabolic rates
- Menstrual dysfunction or amenorrhea
- Lower bone mineral density
- Increased risk of injury

Ensuring athletes are eating enough food and meeting caloric needs improves a dancer's overall health including metabolism, hormone health including a regular menstrual cycle, gut health, mental health, more efficient muscle recovery, cardiovascular health, endurance and greatly reduces the risk of injury. Although portions may differ based on the dancer's age and size, most athletes need three meals and two to three snacks daily.

Dancers should have a meal two to four hours before practice and a snack 30 to 60 minutes before their activity. For practices after school, the dancer may have lunch at noon and a snack a half hour before practice. If rehearsal goes from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the weekend, eat breakfast between 6 a.m. and 7 a.m., have two to three snacks during practice and eat lunch right after rehearsal. This type of fueling during rehearsals provides much needed support for dancers to perform their best.

Snack ideas for dancers:

- Granola bar
- Fruit with cheese
- Yogurt with fruit and granola
- Bagel with cream cheese or peanut butter
- Hard boiled eggs and crackers
- Energy bites
- Trail mix with nuts and fruit
- A fruit and yogurt smoothie
- Edamame (fresh or dried)
- Cheese and crackers
- Hummus with crackers and veggies

DISCIPLINE POLICY



At Ballet Etudes we believe in creating a positive, nurturing, and professional environment for all our students. We emphasize the importance of being part of a group, respecting others, our teachers and staff, and the studio property. Our goal is to foster good habits and cultivate a culture of compliance with rules of conduct.

Continued disruptive behavior may require the involvement of the parent or guardian. We believe in open communication and will reach out to discuss the situation. Please remember that our ultimate goal is to provide a safe and productive environment for all students.

TERMINATION OF COMPANY MEMBERSHIP

In certain rare circumstances, the Artistic Director and/or board of directors may need to terminate a dancer's company membership. We always strive to address and resolve any problematic situation before considering termination. Reasons for termination of enrollment may include:

- Disruptive or dangerous behavior by students or their parents.
- Abuse of other children, staff, or property.

We want every student to have a positive and fulfilling experience at Ballet Etudes. Rest assured, termination is a last resort, and we will make every effort to resolve any challenges that may arise.

We are here to support and guide you and your child throughout their dance education. Let's work together to create an uplifting and joyful dance experience for everyone involved!

ANTI-BULLYING, HARASSMENT & VICTIMIZATION

All students, including Company Members, Artistic Staff, Teachers, Board Members, and volunteers, must acknowledge and agree to this policy upon registration within the Parent Portal. Ballet Etudes is dedicated to maintaining a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment, free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination. The policy defines unacceptable behavior and explains how such concerns will be addressed. It applies to all individuals involved in Ballet Etudes activities, both on and off premises. While bullying and harassment will be formally addressed, other interpersonal issues between dancers or parents should first be resolved privately or with Artistic Staff support when needed.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

Class requirements for company members (by level) are designed to support your continued progress and help prevent injuries. Please refer to your company contract for specific details and exact requirements per company level.

Attendance in company classes held at the theater during production weekends is required to ensure your body is properly warmed up for performances and remains warm backstage.

SERVICE HOURS

Service hours are available for company members, family members or friends of company members who wished to be more involved with the productions during load in, load out, stage crew, make up or any other volunteer activities. We are happy to provide documentation for signatures or any service hour requirements.