

SYDNEY NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS DANCE FESTIVAL

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

MISSION STATEMENT

The Sydney North Public Schools Dance Festival's mission is to provide public school students the opportunity to perform Dance in a professional theatre environment. To this end, the festival is guided by the following principles – *inclusivity, *a reflection of the ethos and standards of public education, *an understanding of dance as a performing art, *an appreciation for collaborative endeavour and *aspiration for excellence.

FESTIVAL APPLICATIONS

Schools seeking to participate in the **Sydney North Public Schools Dance Festival** must apply **online by the due date**. This is not negotiable. **The application must be approved by the school's principal.**

- Items must contain **no fewer than 6 and no more than 24 dancers**. Please note this does not mean 24 dancers on stage at any one time; it means items must have no more than 24 performers **in total**.
- Schools are to enter no more than **2 items for Primary Schools and 3 items for Secondary Schools**. (Any request for a variation to this must be made in the relevant section of the online application and be endorsed by the Principal. All requests will be considered on their merits and will not necessarily be approved.)
- Secondary School items should cover a period of **between 2 and 6 minutes duration** only.
- Primary School items should cover a period of **between 2 and 4 minutes duration** only.
- Individual students are to appear in only one item per school.

CHOREOGRAPHERS

Items for the Festival should be choreographed by one or more of the following:

- Department of Education teachers
- Students who are currently attending a government school
- Non-Departmental dance teachers who conduct dance programs within the school
- Volunteers with dance experience (parents/ex-students/older siblings)

Choreography by non-Departmental dance teachers and students must be developed with the supervision of a Departmental teacher at that school. Choreography must be original and in accordance with copyright laws.

Schools that use non-Departmental teachers to choreograph their festival item must complete the relevant section of the online application in order to have their item considered for inclusion.

ITEM CONTENT

All items should exemplify the objectives of the Department of Education Creative Arts and Dance Syllabuses. Choices made by the choreographer should be appropriate to the age, gender and stage of development of the students.

Items that are prepared for eisteddfods and/or school-related events that do not adhere to the SNPS Dance Festival Participation Criteria, will not be included.

The following should be considered in the presentation of all items -

Intent

- Items should be developed with a clear intent/theme in mind. This should relate to how the audience is meant to think, feel or imagine in response. Intent will often involve a thematic approach or the presentation of a theme.
- Intents/themes should be consistent with item titles, program notes and movement, music, costume and prop choices.
- Portrayal of some themes is inappropriate for school-aged students - for example - (but not limited to) romantic relationships, physical infatuation, depression, suicide, sexism, violence, and drug and alcohol abuse.
- Sensitivity should be displayed in the treatment of cultural appropriation and adaptation.

Movement

- All items should adhere to the accepted **Safe Dance Principles** as outlined by the SNPS Dance Committee. **See Appendix I of this document.**
- Movement should explore the elements of dance - space, time and dynamics and the relationships between performers (including formations and the optimal use and variation of the stage space.)
- Movements of a suggestive nature such as chest and pelvic thrusts, running hands down the body and movement that inappropriately focuses attention on parts of the body must be avoided.
- Acrobatic movement or tricks should not be part of the choreography. **See Appendix I of this document.**
- Extended focus on individual performers/soloists within an item is to be avoided.

Music

- Please read all lyrics thoroughly and be aware of the intent of the music and its subject matter.
- Where a piece of music contains lyrics, a copy of these lyrics must be included in the festival application.
- Items containing songs with inappropriate lyrics, themes, context and/or sub-context **will not be accepted** (please note this includes edited tracks where offensive lyrics are removed or where a "clean" version has been obtained).
- Songs represented by video clips that contain adult themes or are otherwise inappropriate for students, **will not be accepted.**
- Some examples of songs with inappropriate themes and/or lyrics include (but are not limited to) Uptown Funk by Bruno Mars, Smooth Criminal by Michael Jackson, Starships by Nicki Minaj, Gangnam Style by Psy or Greased Lightning from Grease. If you are unsure about your song choice, please ask for clarification.
- Top 40 hits or current popular songs should be avoided, unless they are relevant to the intent/theme of the item.
- Please be familiar with and adhere to Music Copyright Guide for Schools.

Costume

- Costumes should respect the dignity of all performers at all times. Sensitivity should be shown to all students and all body types.
- Unacceptable costumes include bare or cut-out midriffs, low necklines or V-neck leotards, overly brief shorts, sheer or see-through tops or bottoms, costumes which reveal underwear etc.
- Please be aware that costumes ordered online or not custom fitted, may need adjusting and need to be organised well before auditions.

Props

- Props (hand-held or free-standing) should be integral to the item's intent, comply with WHS guidelines and be safe to load, set, strike and store.

AUDITION PROCESS

Selection for performance will be by live audition. This is not negotiable. The live audition process connects schools, teachers, students and the Festival organisers during the preparation phase, so that there is a shared vision for the standards they all aspire to.

- A panel comprising of Sydney North Public Schools Dance representatives will conduct the auditions.
- The auditions will be held at central venues.
- Auditions by video **will not be accepted.**
- All items should be completed or as near to completion as possible at time of audition.
- Audition feedback should be considered and acted upon.
- One student in full costume for each "character" in your item should be presented at time of audition.
- Auditioning groups must be prepared to make changes to costumes that do not follow the criteria above.
- All necessary paperwork must be submitted at the time of the audition.

Sydney North Public Schools Dance has the responsibility for the organisation of the festival and reserves the right to insist upon adherence to the criteria at any time.

ALL TEACHERS PLEASE READ

<h2>Safe Dance Principles</h2>

Amongst the responsibilities of the teacher's ongoing duty of care is to consider accepted principles of safe dance practice. All movement activity entails potential risk of injury and the teacher cannot eliminate it altogether, but should mitigate it in class and choreographic scenarios.

The Australian Curriculum defines Safe Dance Practice as *'the practice of selecting and executing safe movement. The focus is on providing dance activities and exercises which allow students to participate without risk of injury. All dance movement should be performed relevant to an individual's body type and capabilities'*.

Certain movement done by certain individuals is often deemed **"contra-indicated"** – i.e. **should not be attempted**. This will depend on the age, experience, skill level, alignment, strength, flexibility and control of the individual. Given that teachers work with students who often lack in these qualities **there are many movements**, which are contra-indicated.

The main areas, which are at risk of injury, are –

- **the knee**, which is susceptible because it is a hinge joint, which works optimally in one plane.
- **the foot and ankle**, which are relatively small structures which bear large loads, particularly when they leave and return to the ground.
- **the back**, because it is susceptible to injury, because it is structurally complex, with its network of bones, cartilages (discs), muscles and nerves and its great potential for movement.

Unsafe Movements include (but are not limited to) –

- **Forced extension of muscles** (stretching) in manoeuvres like full splits, leg mounts, reverse leg mounts, penchés
- **Full head or neck** rolls
- **Hyper-extension** of the back – in elements like back arches, bridges, walkovers (Forward or Backward)
- **Any form of "knee drop" or "toe-over"** – single leg or two-legged, "Sarah Jane", "Toe-breaker"
- **Any uncontrolled or unaligned landing from a jump**, (frequently as a result of poor "form" in the air)
- **Hyper-flexion** (extreme bending) of the knees (under load) i.e. deep knee bends
- **Loading the back with weight** (lifts or weight-sharing) where the shoulders, hips, knees and feet are not aligned.
- **Movements** which involve **ballistic (bouncing) stretching of muscles**
- **Acrobatic elements** – cartwheels, aerial cartwheels, biranis, somersaults, flick-flacks, assisted flips, fly-rolls. Frequently these are poorly performed and controlled and when executed in a space full of other bodies, represent a risk to other performers.

Please note that much of the movement noted above often has very little relevance to the theme or intent of the dance work presented. These are the "Ta Da!" or "Look Mum, No Hands!" moments and relevant, interesting and impressive alternatives are always available.

The SNPS Dance Committee reserves the right to prohibit the use of unsafe, high-risk or poorly executed movements or elements.