



Upper School Newsletter - 15th June 2020

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am very pleased to write to you personally following the end of my maternity leave. I am sure you will join me in saying a huge thank you to Miss Emma for the absolutely wonderful job she has done of managing the school whilst I have been away, in particular setting up and operating our fantastic online school. Miss Emma is currently covering for our Adult, Upper and Lower School Administrators and going forwards, she will continue to be heavily involved in the school as our Deputy Principal.

This term has been challenging and interesting and I am very proud of how well so many of our students and teachers have adjusted to online classes. The online classes seem to be a little ray of sunlight each week for children and teachers alike. Thank you to everyone who has and continues to support the school as part of our online community. I do, however, understand that online classes are not suitable for all of our students and I know we all cannot wait until we can be back together in the dance studios again.

Miss Emma and I are starting to put together the 'normal' timetable for academic year 2020-2021 and then, once we receive more information about how and when we can reopen the studios for 'in person' classes, we will be able to adjust the timetable to suit. We anticipate that at least the first half of the autumn term will have to be a combination of online and 'in person' classes, but through this method, we very much hope it will be possible for each of our students to attend classes in the studio either weekly, fortnightly or monthly, and to continue to participate in all of their other classes online.

So that we can accurately put together the timetable for academic year 2020-2021, please reply to this email letting us know if you are planning to leave the school or would like to drop / add / change any classes for your child when we reopen. Obviously, you do not yet know what the timetable will be so it will not be possible at this stage to make all decisions, but if you have already made any choices about classes next academic year, then please let us know by Sunday 21st June to help us with our timetabling.

We are also busy preparing the studios for reopening in the safest possible way. As well as deep cleaning, repairing, repainting and reflooring the upstairs, we will be temporarily removing many shared resources, the sofas etc and ensuring hand washing facilities are as hygienic as possible. We are already working on

how we can implement social distancing within classes and for all of our school community in the communal areas. Our Adult and Lower School Administrator, Katarina Hill, is undertaking online training for Covid-19 safety and she will be responsible for ensuring our reopening is as safe as possible.

I will write to you as soon as we have further information about reopening including the autumn term timetable. In the meantime, you will find below a lot of updates about upcoming school events etc so please read the sections that are relevant to you . . .

2020-2021 Timetable - National and new 'Stretch & Technique' and 'Power & Skills' classes

I am able to confirm at this time, that with a heavy heart, I have made the decision to no longer offer National classes from Grade 2 upwards and therefore, children will stop learning National dance with us after taking their Grade 1 examination.

I have always been passionate about children learning National alongside classical ballet because the two styles are so interlinked, with very many traditional classical ballets having National dances as an integral part of the story. National dance classes help to develop spatial awareness, understanding of patterning in dance and partner work skills, both physical and in terms of connection. For these reasons, children in Primary and Grade 1 ballet will continue to learn National dance to gain a basic introduction to the genre.

However, for those students in higher ballet and modern levels, increasing levels of flexibility is expected and we do not feel that many of our students are reaching the required level of flexibility, compared to their above average technique and artistry. For this reason, I am very excited to announce that when we reopen, we will be introducing an exciting new class for our students in higher ballet grades and to replace Grade 2 National plus classes.

These new classes will be called '**Stretch & Technique**' and will be based on a combination of two very different dance training techniques that I and some of the other teachers at SLDS have been following for many years. The first is called Progressing Ballet Technique (PBT) and the second is called Radar Technique. Both methods train the body for the demands of higher levels classical ballet and modern dance. PBT is primarily exercises for improving technique and strength and the aspects of Radar that we will be focusing on in these classes will aim to develop flexibility.

Please feel free to visit the sites below for more information about these methods:

<https://pbt.dance/>

<https://radartechnique.com/>

Those children who already do our Body Conditioning classes will continue these classes as well as join the new 'Stretch & Technique' classes, but Body Conditioning classes will be renamed 'Power & Skills'. We will be removing some of the flexibility element of the Body Conditioning classes (as this will be covered in our new 'Stretch & Technique' classes), to allow more time to focus on cardio fitness for dance, strength and developing the most dynamic and powerful dance movements such as kicks, leaps and turns which are very much a part of the Radar skill set and vital for any student considering pursuing a career in dance.

I hope our new 'Stretch & Technique' classes and adjusted 'Power & Skills' classes are something your child can look forward to and they do not feel too much disappointment to be stopping learning National dance.

It will not be possible to hold any future National examination sessions for our Primary and Grade 1 students and so instead, children will automatically move up to the next grade, or commence our new 'Stretch & Technique' classes, after taking a ballet examination. However, if your child was due to take a National examination (at any level) last March, then if we are able to hold an examination session at the start of autumn term and if the ISTD can navigate a way to examine National dance within the constraints of social distancing, then above change will not impact upon rearranging cancelled National examinations.

Show update

We are really happy to announce that we have secured new dates for our show '*The Scarecrows' Wedding*' and '*This is Me!!*'. Our show will now be held **Sunday 10th January 2021** at the Bromley Churchill Theatre, with rehearsals in the theatre the day before the performance day (Saturday 9th January). As was the plan for the July dates, there will also be rehearsals on a few Sunday's prior to this weekend for singers and children who are cast as main parts in the ballet - dates for these rehearsals are TBA.

We are so pleased to have secured these new dates so that the children now have something really exciting and fun to look forward to! We very much hope many of the children will still be able to take part. Our composer Mr. Rush has almost finished creating the music for the ballet and it is amazing, so we are so excited to start working on it!

If your child was due to participate and you are not available on these dates and therefore sadly, your child will be unable to take part in our show then you will be entitled to a full refund for the entry fee you have paid. **Please email sldsperformances@gmail.com with your bank details by Monday 29th June if your child is unable to take part and therefore, you would like a refund.**

After this date, we will budget for the show on the basis that your child will be taking part and it will not be possible to apply for the refund.

Please note that refunds will be made in one sitting in September.

If your child has mock GCSE or A-Level examinations this January and you are concerned about time for revision over the show weekend, then please email sldsperformances@gmail.com by **Monday 22nd June** so that we can try to find a solution to enable your child to participate but not to the detriment of their academic results.

If previously, your child was unable to participate in our July show, but you are going to be available for the January dates and so now you think your child would like to participate, then **please email sldsperformances@gmail.com by Monday 22nd June** and detailed information will be sent to you to enable you to make an informed decision about participating.

Finally, please note that as our show has been pushed back to January 2021, then we will not also be putting on a show in summer term 2021 as was previously planned.

Examinations update

Thank you to those who have responded to the email Ciera sent out about whether or not those children who had their examinations cancelled in March would like to take their examination in the autumn term if a session can be arranged. If you have not responded then please make sure you do by **Wednesday 17th June** to enable us to book just as the ISTD start to organise rescheduling cancelled sessions.

You may be aware that our next examination session was originally planned for spring term 2021. As our show date has now been pushed back to January 2021, our examination session will be moved to end of summer term 2021 - dates TBA.

Term dates (updates in red)

SUMMER TERM 2020 DATES

Our online classes this term finish on Friday 17th July.

AUTUMN TERM 2020 DATES (12 weeks)

Monday 7th September - Sunday 19th October

Half term - Monday 19th - Sunday 1st November inc *(we may be holding some classes over half term to make up for previously cancelled classes)*

Monday 2nd November - Sunday 13th December

Acting class dates - TBC

SPRING TERM 2021 DATES (11 weeks)

Monday 4th January - Sunday 14th February (6 weeks)

Half term - Monday 15th to Sunday 21st February inc

Monday 22nd February - Sunday 28th March (5 weeks)

Acting class dates - TBC

Show at Bromley Churchill Theatre - Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th January

SUMMER TERM 2021 DATES (12 weeks)

Saturday 17th April - Friday 28th May (classes will take place on Saturday 1st May and Monday 3rd May which is a Bank Holiday weekend)

Half term - Saturday 29th May to Sunday 6th June inc (note - there are two Saturday's off)

Monday 7th June - Sunday 17th July

Acting class dates - TBC

Class observation week for Upper School Pre-Primary ballet (II), Pre-Primary tap (III) & Primary modern (III) plus only - Saturday 15th to Friday 21st May inc

Summer term examination session - dates TBA

Staff updates

I am very sad to announce that from September, Helen will be stepping down from her position of Upper School Administrator as she feels it's time to move on to new challenges. Helen has been a fantastic part of our office team who will be greatly missed by us and I am sure, by many of you. We wish Helen all the best in her new challenges. Tilly Rayner (who some of you will know as Miss Tilly), will gradually be stepping into Helen's shoes, so please welcome her into this new role and bear with her as she finds her feet.

We are also sad to say that Miss Jenny will be leaving our Saturday teaching team as she wants to spend more time developing her own dance school. Miss Jenny's boundless energy and love of teaching some of our very youngest children will certainly be missed by everyone. We wish Miss Jenny the best of luck with her dance school.

Miss Steph has been one of our main Festival Team teachers as well as our Advanced tap teacher for the past few years and we are very sorry indeed that she has decided to leave us at the end of this term because she has secured a fantastic teaching opportunity much closer to where she lives. I'd like to thank Miss Steph for the creativity and passion for performing that she has put into choreographing and coaching

some superb, winning festival dances. She will be greatly missed by everyone, especially our Festival Team. We wish her the best of luck for the future.

When possible, we will be arranging a leaving get together for our teachers so that your children can say goodbye.

Also, Miss Marina returned to her home country of Italy at the beginning of the pandemic and unfortunately will not be returning to assist on Saturdays. However, Miss Marina is putting her energy and time into developing her new business mentoring and life coaching dancers, so we may see her again in the future. We wish her all the best on her new venture.

Live Zoom classes over the summer holiday

As the possibility of being able to go on holiday is unclear, we are wondering whether our students might like to continue some of their dance classes over the summer holiday for a 4 or 6 week block.

The aim of the summer holiday classes would be to have fun through free work exercises and learning repertoire from ballet's and musical's alongside maintaining flexibility, strength and technique.

Classes would be live via Zoom once or twice a week and could take place in the morning or early evening - whichever suited the majority of the group. And those students who were not able to make the day / time of the live class, could watch a recording of the live Zoom class.

Also, we hope it may also be possible for us to hold occasional 'in person' classes in small groups in an outdoor space; this is something we are currently looking into.

Depending on the numbers of students confirming their attendance in each class we create, we hope to be able to make a reduction to our normal class fees for these lessons.

So that we can start to organise these summer holiday classes, if you are interested in your child signing up then please can you reply to this email by **Monday 22nd June** answering the following questions:

1. Child's name
2. Which genres of dance would your child be interested in signing up to over the summer?
3. If we were able to offer a 25% discount to those students choosing to attend a lesson per week in all 3 genres - ballet, tap and modern - would you therefore want your child to attend all 3 genres?
4. Would you prefer the lessons for each genre to be once or twice a week?

5. Would you prefer a 4 week or 6 week block of lessons?
6. Which weekday(s) would your child be able to attend the class? Please state ALL of the weekdays that your child could be available. Also, please state whether your child would be available in the morning and/or evening for each day that they are available.
7. Would you prefer morning or evening lessons? (we would aim for there to be only one lesson scheduled per day for your child).
8. Please give any other relevant information to help us plan our summer holiday classes.

If you have more than one child who wishes to attend then please answer all of above for each child.

FREE Musical Theatre workshops! REPLY NOW TO BOOK YOUR SPACE!

I am very happy to let you know that as a 'well done' to those students who have worked so hard in their online classes this term, we have 32 spaces available for two Live Zoom workshops with established Musical Theatre professional performer, Luke Redmore. [@redmoreluke](#) [@redmoreworkshop](#)

Luke will hold 2 x 60 minute Musical Theatre workshops in the morning on **Saturday 4th July** - the day we would have been rehearsing in the theatre for our show : (The workshop for the younger children will be 'Hairspray' the musical and for the older students, it will be 'Chicago'.

There is no charge for children to take part but spaces will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. There are only 16 places available for each workshop so reply to this email now for the best chance of getting a space! Please note that the workshops are only open to students who are in Grade 2 modern / ballet and upwards and are currently participating in our online classes. Also, you must be happy for photos and videos of your child participating in the class to be posted on social media (please note - their name may be seen in pictures as per the name you use as their Zoom account).

This is a fantastic opportunity to learn from a professional who is currently working in the West End. Luke trained at Laine Theatre Arts and most recently had been performing in *'Book of Mormon'* in the West End. He has also performed various roles in *'Cats'* and *'Chicago'*. Luke says *'I love sharing my passion for musical theatre with the stars of the future and can't wait to work with the students of the South London Dance School.'*

We hope many of you are able to apply to take part in his workshops. If your child is successful in gaining a place then we will contact you next week.

LIVE online private lessons via Zoom

Our LIVE online private lessons with our wonderful teachers are now up and running via Zoom so that students can benefit from live interaction and immediate feedback on their performance.

Children in Primary modern (III) / Pre-Primary tap (III) / Pre-Primary ballet (II) and all levels above can choose to work on technique, syllabus exercises, specific steps / movements, performance / character, increasing confidence, musicality, developing own choreography, strength, flexibility, body conditioning etc. In fact, anything your child would like to work on and to which their teacher agrees, so even if you have very limited space in which to move, there is still so much that can be achieved.

There is also the added benefit of having one to one time with a teacher they know and love which could help with feelings of isolation and loneliness at this time.

Private lessons are at the reduced rate of £23 for 30 minutes. All lessons will be recorded for safe guarding purposes but recordings will not be used for any purpose (except legal) without permission from the Parent / Guardian.

Please reply to this email asap if you are interested in booking private lessons for your child with a minimum booking of 3 lessons over 3 weeks. If we have enough interested then we may also be able to continue online private lessons over the summer holiday and into next term.

SLDS' Covid-19 Bursaries for Young Dancers Scheme

I am very pleased to let you know that we have been able to support several of our students whose families are currently experiencing exceptional financial difficulties under our new Covid-19 Bursary Scheme. The children are most grateful to be able to attend online classes which they otherwise would not have been able to do.

Due to the massive economic impact of Covid-19, we anticipate that unfortunately, more children may need support over the coming months in order to be able to continue learning dance with us. As the dance school is suffering as a business, unfortunately we are not in a position to be able to sustain this support long term. Therefore, if you are able to help and would be interested in 'sponsoring' another SLDS student for their dance classes then please do get in touch to discuss how this could work. Also, if you wish to ask for support for your child then please get in touch and we will do our best to support at this time.

Choreography Competition

I would like to take this opportunity to say a huge congratulations to the winners of our recent choreography competition; if you have not already viewed their videos on our social media please do! The standard of all entries was extremely high making choosing the winners a very difficult job for Anna at Duo Dance. We are very proud of all of our students who entered dances, showing off their creativity, musicality and artistry. We are planning to hold more competitions over the summer holidays to keep our students busy, so don't worry if you missed out this time!

Student news

We want to wish **Jasmine Gillott** the best of luck as she leaves SLDS aged 18. Jasmine has danced with us since she the age of 5 during which time she has achieved outstanding examinations results, won many medals at dance festivals and most recently was chosen to represent the tap faculty at the ISTD Bursary awards. Jasmine has been an inspiration to many of our younger dancers over recent years and we are extremely proud of the young woman she has grown into. We all wish her the best of luck in her gap year before she goes to university to study Environmental Science.

Did you spot ex-student **Ruben Garcia** on BBC4's Men at the Barre - if you missed it do catch up, it was aired Wednesday 27th May. It is a fantastic documentary about male ballet dancers including a trip to White Lodge where we spot Ruben standing out in his year 7 boys ballet class. Ruben had been thoroughly enjoying his first year at the infamous Royal Ballet School and he cannot wait to get back!

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this long email; I hope the information is helpful to you. Please contact Miss Emma at your normal Administrator's email address if you have any questions.

I very much hope to see some of you soon!

Miss Zoe

Principal - South London Dance School

PS - I would like to let you know that Maggie Bulman, who makes fabulous dance costumes for our students, is currently selling handmade masks for children and adults in a range of fab materials ;) This is following the incredible voluntary work she did making PPE for local NHS workers. Please follow this link to purchase yours - <https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/maggiEBulmanmasks>