

Academy of Movement and Music

605 Lake Street • Oak Park, Illinois 60302 • 708•848-2329

April 18, 2019

To My Fellow Dance Colleagues:

It is a great pleasure to write this letter of recommendation for Jan Dunn; Jan presented a three hour seminar to the staff, dancers and parents at the Academy of Movement and Music on April 6, 2019. As the director of the school, I had been aware of Jan through IADMS and their journal, and wanted to make sure we were looking out for our dancers. The title of Jan's seminar was Best Practices for Training Better Dancers; she covered:

Risk Factors: 1) Poor Alignment and Faulty Technique; 2) Anatomical Limitations; 3) Environmental Factors; 4) Fatigue – Overuse and Overtraining Syndrome; 5) Muscular Imbalances; 6) Lack of Proper Warm-up; 7) Psychological Factors; 8) Premature Pointe Work; 9) Adolescent Growth Spurt Concerns; 10) Poor Nutrition.

When to Seek Help and What Kind of Help

Prevention of Dance Injuries: 1) Know your own body; 2) Have good postural/movement patterns in both dance and everyday life; 3) Don't ignore injuries; 4) Seek help in returning to dance to avoid re-injury.

The Importance of Conditioning: 1) the Balance of Stretch vs Strength; 2) Somatotypes; 3) Safe Stretching; 4) Hypermobility Concerns (Joint Hypermobility Syndrome); 5) The importance of imagery (Franklin Method); 6) New research on Pilates; 7) Core Control/Back Stabilization.

Jan spoke actively demonstrating and referring to wonderful handouts for the first half of the seminar; then she had the participants actively do a number of different exercises – alone and with a partner. She had them using foam rollers, Franklin Balls and Therabands.

Our almost 50 students that day included a Performing Arts Physical Therapist, Pilates teachers, several ballet teachers, parents and about 20 students ages 10 – 18, plus about 6 older adult ballet students. In spite of the wide range of ages and experience, Jan was clear and concise; her advice was very practical and basic, but she utilized proper terminology and when she answered questions, she really spoke to the question and engaged each person. I believe everyone left feeling that they had learned a LOT and that the seminar had been a very valuable experience and well worth the time on a lovely Saturday afternoon. Many of our teachers would like to have Jan return to do a longer workshop – perhaps one that would lead to SIDI (Safe in Dance International) Training and Certification for teachers.

For me, as the director of the school, it was very reassuring that we have been working with our students in proper and non-injurious ways. However, dance today is very competitive and media driven, and having our students hear from an outside expert about the need for self-care and realistic expectations has helped to give our staff both confidence and credibility. It isn't easy to deal with a large number of teen who watch YouTube videos of dancers overstretching and to hold our own to best practices. Jan's seminar really, really helped us a lot. Many of the teens have spoken to me about how much they learned and that is truly wonderful!

I would recommend Jan Dunn highly as a speaker and a teacher; her energy, enthusiasm and knowledge is remarkable and she was able to lead the group through exercises that brought to life much of what she presented in lecture. I could almost see the light bulbs going on above the heads of the dancers, and the look of comprehension and self-realization on their faces was really remarkable. When I was helping Jan to copy the many handouts she wanted to share with the students, I did not see how she was going to cover so much information – but she really did, and we all learned and loved the experience.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Clemens

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