DANCE PROGRAM

american.edu/cas/performing-arts/dance.cfm

Photo: Traci J. Brooks
DEPARTMENT MISSION
The Department of Performing Arts inspires and develops the intellectual and creative potential of students, faculty, staff, and alumni of American University. We foster excellence in scholarship, artistry, and experiential inquiry within and between the disciplines of arts management, dance, music, theatre, and musical theatre. By integrating the traditions and innovations of a liberal arts education in the context of the vibrant Washington, D.C., arts community, we cultivate citizens who actively contribute to their local and global communities and embody the moral and ethical responsibilities of the 21st century.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM
The dance minor at AU provides an opportunity for concentrated study in dance within a liberal arts curriculum. The program is grounded in the development of students as articulate movers, thinkers, writers, speakers, and creators of dance, providing a balance between artistic expression, technical proficiency, and scholarly inquiry. Students are instructed by experienced, professional faculty, comprised of seasoned educators and working artists.
PROGRAM OBJECTIVES
• To be an integral part of the general education curriculum and liberal arts studies at the university.
• To provide technically sound, varied course offerings in dance.
• To offer courses that develop an understanding of the aesthetic, historical, and kinesiological values of dance.
• To provide a student-centered curriculum, demonstrated in:
  * Course instruction
  * Performance opportunities
  * Support of student initiated activities
  * Provision of student leadership opportunities; and
  * The promotion of performance as integral to dance education.
• To encourage and develop creative individual expression within each student.
• To provide students with rich experiences in the studio, classroom, and through performance that enhance skill and knowledge of the field.
• To encourage students to reflect critically, communicate effectively, and conduct themselves professionally through the study of dance.

PROGRAM POLICIES
• Auditions are not required for entrance into the Dance Program.
• Auditions are required for intermediate and advanced placement in technique courses.
• All prospective dance minors must meet with an academic advisor in the Department of Performing Arts prior to declaring the dance minor.
• Students may repeat dance technique courses for credit.
• Students must successfully complete a 3-credit dance technique course prior to registering for 1-credit Dance Practicum courses.
• Students must be registered for a dance technique course to perform in the Informal Dance Showcase, American University Dance Company, or the Spring Dance Concert.
MINOR REQUIREMENTS
22 credit hours with grades of C or better.

Students intending to pursue the dance minor must meet with the dance program director. Students must achieve proficiency in dance performance and scholarship. Required levels of proficiency are decided individually in conference with the dance program director, and take into account the student’s interests, background, and abilities in dance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
PERF-200 Dance and Society (3)
PERF-307 The Principles of Movement (3)
PERF-411 Composition of Dance I (3)
One of the following courses:
• PERF-455 Dance Styles for the Musical Theatre (3)
• PERF-306 The Moving Body (3)
• PERF-450 Rotating Topics in Theatre (3)
• PERF-303 Modern Dance IV
• PERF-596 Selected Topics Non-Recurring (3)

Two 3-credit dance technique courses at the intermediate or advanced level.

Four 1-credit dance technique courses at the intermediate or advanced level.

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**PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES**

**Informal Showcase** (Fall and Spring Semesters)
- End of semester recital for dance and musical theatre students
- Open to all students registered for dance technique courses

**Choreolab** (Fall Semester)
- Workshop/Showcase for student choreographers
- By audition only
- Student work is adjudicated by local professional dance artists
- Student choreographers must apply to participate

**Spring Dance Concert** (Spring Semester)
- By audition only
- Annual concert of faculty, student, and guest artist works performed by AU students

**American University Dance Company** (Fall and Spring Semesters)
- By audition only

**American College Dance Festival** (Spring Semester)
- Faculty and/or student choreographed works are performed in formal and informal concerts

**Student Organizations and AU Athletics**
AU has multiple student-run dance groups who perform on and off campus each semester, including the Department of Performing Arts sponsored student group AU in Motion. Information about student groups is available from the AU Student Activities office at 202-885-3390.

For information about the AU Dance Team, please contact the American University Athletics Department at 202-885-3000.
About the American University Dance Company
Founded in 2011, AU/DC produces high quality concert dance works that appeal to diverse audiences, while providing an opportunity for American University students to participate, rehearse, and perform in a pre-professional dance environment that is both rigorous and nurturing. Company members perform a carefully selected repertory of modern, contemporary, contemporary ballet, and jazz dance works choreographed by American University faculty, artists in residence, and distinguished professional guest artists. Performance opportunities within and outside of the university are provided and culminate in the American University Spring Dance Concert at the Greenberg Theatre. AU/DC is under the direction of the Dance Program’s artist in residence and Dance Program Director Melanie George.

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How do I declare a dance minor?
All AU students must declare a major before declaring a minor. After meeting with the dance program director, students must complete the College of Arts and Sciences online minor declaration form.

Do I need to audition or be a dance minor to participate in the Dance Program?
For intermediate- and advanced-level dance classes, placement auditions are required prior to registration. No audition is needed for beginning-level classes. Performance opportunities are open to all students enrolled at AU. Placement auditions take place in:
- April (for fall registration)
- August (prior to the start of classes for fall registration)
- November (for spring registration)

How many students are in dance technique courses?
Though enrollment will vary each semester, dance technique courses are capped at 18 students for safety and effective instruction.

What dance forms are offered?
There are multiple levels of ballet, jazz, modern, and tap. Additionally, there are courses in social and world dance forms including African dance.
How many dance courses can I take per semester?
You can take as many courses as will fit in your schedule.

Are there performance opportunities?
Yes. The Dance Program produces one mainstage concert on campus at the Harold and Sylvia Greenberg Theatre, a formal concert off campus at a local theatre, a choreographer’s workshop/performance, and two informal showcases each academic year. Each spring, students perform at the American College Dance Festival. Additionally, there are multiple student-run organizations that perform on and off campus.

How many dance studios are there?
The primary dance studio, in the Katzen Arts Center, is equipped with a sprung, marley-covered floor, portable barres, multifunction stereo, an audio/visual system for multimedia presentations, and wireless internet connection. Additionally, dance classes and rehearsals occur in the Katzen Studio Theatre and in Cassell Hall.

How many dance faculty members are there?
The Dance Program is comprised of two full-time faculty members, an artist in residence, and multiple adjunct faculty members who bring their expertise from the professional world to AU’s classrooms.

What is AU’s connection to the professional dance community, locally, nationally and internationally?
In addition to a professionally active faculty, the Dance Program has a long history of hosting nationally and internationally recognized guest artists who teach master classes, stage choreography, present lecture-demonstrations, adjudicate student choreography and serve as creative advisors and professional mentors to students. Past guest artists include John Beasant III, Eun Jung Choi, Sean Curran, Peter DiMuro, Kimberly Karpanthy Amir Kolben, Joan Meggitt, Francisca Morand, Christopher K. Morgan, Leanne Schmidt, Sara Skaggs, Christian von Howard, and Nicole Wolcott. Also, many AU alumni are active members of the dance field and maintain close ties with the university.
The Washington, DC, area has a vibrant dance community with numerous venues for performance and classes, as well as being home to many seasoned and burgeoning dance companies. Local performances, auditions, and information are posted on the call board in the Katzen dance studio. In addition, with AU’s close proximity to many leading arts organizations, students have the opportunity to create internships and independent studies in dance education, management, and performance.

**May I observe a dance class?**
Yes. Contact danceprogram@american.edu for further information.

**Can I take a tour of the Katzen Arts Center?**
Yes, please visit american.edu/admissions/toursinfosessions.cfm for more information.
COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
Perf-102 Modern Dance
An introduction to the basic principles and theories of modern dance technique with an emphasis on performance. Skill development is accompanied by a study of twentieth century choreographers and the social conditions shaping their artistry. Readings, videos, concerts, and written work enhance participants’ knowledge. Usually offered every term.

PERF-103 Beginning Jazz Dance
An introduction to jazz dance technique with emphasis on concert jazz dance and musical theatre dance vocabulary. Technique development and performance skill are augmented by readings, videos, concerts, and written work. Usually offered every term.

PERF-104 Beginning Ballet
An introduction to basic ballet technique with emphasis on movement vocabulary, terminology, placement, and performance. Readings, performances, and written work provide context, while development of technical skill helps cultivate proficiency and understanding. Usually offered every term.

PERF-108 Beginning Tap Dance
An introduction to basic tap technique and movement patterns. Dexterity, varying sound intensity, rhythm, and musicality are emphasized. Technical development is augmented by readings and written work exploring tap’s emergence as a cross-cultural integration of Irish and African traditions in the United States and its development as a theatrical dance form. Usually offered every fall.

PERF-200 Dance as an Art Form
A survey of dance as an artistic, social, and cultural form. Students discover the diverse ways dance represents and reflects society’s experiences and values. Through lectures, readings, written work, performances, movement labs, and choreography/performance assignments students develop an understanding of aesthetics, function, and expression in dance. Usually offered every term.
PERF-200 Dance and Society
Students learn about the cultural importance of dance throughout history, including its ritual, social, and theatrical functions. Students discover the diverse ways and cultural contexts in which people express fundamental experiences and emotions through dance. Usually offered every spring.

PERF-202 Modern Dance II
A study of modern dance technique for the intermediate dancer with emphasis on complex movement patterns and improvisation. Skill development is augmented by readings, videos, concerts and written work, promoting an understanding of the role of dance as a form of creative expression that gives insight into the individual and society. Usually offered every term. Prerequisite: audition or permission of dance program director.

PERF-203 Intermediate Jazz Dance
A study of jazz dance technique for the intermediate dancer with emphasis on performance quality, and complex movement patterns. Skill development is augmented by readings, videos, concerts, and written papers, emphasizing the historical evolution and contemporary relevance of the form. Usually offered every term. Prerequisite: audition or permission of the dance program director.

PERF-204 Intermediate Ballet
A study of ballet technique for the intermediate dancer with emphasis on complex movement patterns and increased agility. Skill development is augmented by readings, videos, concerts, and written work. Usually offered every term. Prerequisite: audition or permission of the dance program director.

PERF-206 African Dance
Students learn the inter-relationship between movement and sound, creative expression, and community in African dance. Readings, videos, concerts, and class discussions enhance participants’ knowledge of traditional African society, while providing a context for cross-cultural understanding. Usually offered every term.
PERF-208 Intermediate Tap Dance
A study of tap technique for the intermediate dancer. Multiple tap styles and complex movement combinations are emphasized. Technical development is augmented by readings, videos, concerts, and written work on the history and contemporary relevance of the form. Usually offered every spring. **Prerequisite:** PERF-108 or permission of instructor.

PERF-255 Fundamentals of Dance
An introduction to movement concepts, dance vocabulary, and dance technique for the musical theatre dancer. Usually offered every fall.

Perf-302 Modern Dance III
A study of modern dance technique for the advanced dancer. Personal artistry and advanced technical development and improvisation are emphasized. Technical development and performance studies are augmented by readings, videos, concerts, and papers on performance, technique, and choreography. Usually offered every term. **Prerequisite:** audition or permission of dance program director.

PERF-303 Dance Improvisation
An exploration of spontaneous movement for the development of performance and composition. Movement invention and problem solving are emphasized. Usually offered alternate falls. **Prerequisite:** permission of dance program director.

PERF-307 Principles of Movement
An introduction to human anatomy, kinesiology, and somatics in relation to dance technique, performance, conditioning, and injury prevention. Students develop movement observation and analysis skills as applied to the structure and function of the dancing body. Usually offered alternate springs. **Prerequisite:** permission of dance program director.
**PERF-308 The Moving Body**
Explores awareness of physical instincts, and the skill set to utilize those instincts in the act of physical creative expression on stage. Students use their bodies as exploratory tools to embrace the power of personal creativity and authentic expression. With a focus on physical theatre, the course is designed primarily for actors, but the techniques explored are also applicable to dancers and others in the performing arts. Usually offered every fall. **Prerequisite:** permission of instructor.

**PERF-404 Advanced Ballet**
A study of ballet technique for the advanced dancer. Development of personal artistry, complex movement combinations, and classical and contemporary techniques are emphasized. Technical development and performance studies are augmented by readings, videos, concerts, and papers on contemporary ballet as a reflection of society. Usually offered every term. **Prerequisite:** audition or permission of the dance program director.

**PERF-411 Composition of Dance I**
An introduction to the craft of choreography. Movement invention, improvisation, form, and structure are emphasized, culminating in a cohesive solo piece of choreography created and performed by the student. Usually offered alternate falls. **Prerequisite:** permission of dance program director.

**PERF-412 Composition of Dance II**
Continuation of PERF-411. This course focuses on the continued development of choreography skills with emphasis on the development of thematic material, group composition, and choreography for musical theatre. Usually offered alternate falls. **Prerequisite:** PERF-411 or permission of dance program director.

**PERF-455 Dance Styles for Musical Theatre**
Provides a survey of dance in musical theatre, encompassing repertory, audition techniques, and technique and performance development, as well as practical workshop experience in a range of musical theatre genres. Usually offered every spring. **Prerequisite:** permission of instructor.
DANCE FACULTY

Sandra C. Atkinson is the founder/artistic director of Light Switch Dance Theatre (sites-specific modern dance company) and co-artistic director of the Jazz Is....Dance Project. She has a BA in dance from University of North Carolina at Charlotte and an MA in performing arts: dance from American University. Her professional theatre work includes choreography for Glass Mind Theatre Company (Baltimore, MD) production of Midsummer Night’s Dream, Fells Point Corner Theatre’s (Baltimore, MD) production of Durang Durang, and Strand Theatre’s Production of One Glitz Wish (Baltimore, MD).

Melanie George is the Dance Program director at American University. She holds a BA in dance from Western Michigan University, an MA in dance and graduate certificate in secondary teaching from American University, and is a Certified Movement Analyst. Her choreography spans concert dance, theater, and voice. She has presented her research on jazz dance in the U.S., Canada and Scotland. Publications include “Imbed/In Bed: Two Perspectives on Dance and Collaboration” with Joan Meggitt for Working Together in Qualitative Research (Sense Publishers) and “Jazz Dance, Pop Culture, and the Music Video Era” for
Jazz Dance: A History of the Roots and Branches (University of Florida Press). George has served on the board of the National Dance Education Organization, as an adjudicator for the Metro DC Dance Awards and VelocityDC Dance Festival, and on the committees for the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities and Ohio Board of Regents. George is the co-founder of Jazz Is…Dance Project.

Ralph Glenmore was a principal dancer with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater under the direction of Alvin Ailey. He toured the world, working with choreographers Donald McKayle, Talley Beatty, and Bill T. Jones, among others. As instructor, rehearsal director, stage manager, and choreographer, he worked with the Lula Washington Dance Theater, Debbie Allen Dance Academy, Robinson Project, and Horton Summer Intensive - Daytona Community College, and the Dance Institute of Washington. He also served as dance supervisor for Disney’s The Lion King Los Angeles Company.

Diane Hamilton holds a bachelor’s degree in dance from the University of Maryland. She served on the dance faculty at the Catholic University of America for 13 years and most recently as artistic director at the Musical Theater Center in Rockville, Maryland. Hamilton has choreographed for major venues throughout the East Coast and has trained many performers who have had successful careers on the Broadway stage as well as in film and television.

Marcia Howard has been performing with Coyaba Dance Theater since 1997. She began her training in Baltimore, Maryland, with the Francine School of Dance and the Baltimore Dance Theater. She studied West African dance with Sylvia Soumah and traveled to Dakar, Senegal, in 2000 to study with Bouly Sonko of Les Ballet du Senegal. Howard is an adjunct faculty member at American University and is on faculty at Dance Place and Coyaba Academy. She is the assistant director of Coyaba Dance Theater, an instructor/choreographer with Imagination Stage, and conducts creative movement workshops with the elderly and special needs populations.
Irina Wunder received her classical dance training in Turkmenistan, then a republic of the former Soviet Union. After the collapse of the USSR, she briefly danced with the State Opera Theater while also pursuing a master’s degree in Russian language and literature. Wunder moved to the United States in 1999 where she began to teach dance. She also holds a master’s degree from Laban (London, UK), specializing in optimal practices of performing artists.

Born in Washington, DC, Alice Wylie began her dance training with Jane Bittner and trained extensively with several other renown teachers including Dawei Zhang, Suzanne Farrell, Patricia McBride, Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux, Violette Verdy, and Truman Finney. She attended Indiana University’s prestigious School of Music where she received her Bachelor of Science in Ballet and French. Wylie began her professional career as an apprentice with Ballet Austin. She went on to dance with Kim Robards Dance in Denver, with whom she later joined as a guest artist at the Beijing 2008 Olympics. She danced for eight seasons with Washington DC’s CityDance Ensemble, performing, touring, and teaching internationally throughout the Middle East, Eastern Europe, South America, Russia, and Eurasia. She then served as rehearsal director for Christopher K. Morgan and Artists from 2012-2013. Wylie is an ABT® Certified Teacher who has successfully completed the ABT® Teacher Training Intensive in Primary through Level 3 of the ABT® National Training Curriculum. Currently, she teaches ballet at CityDance Center at Strathmore. She is also an E-RYT 500 through Yoga Alliance and teaches yoga and pilates mat throughout the DC area.
GUEST ARTIST FUND
The Dr. Naima Prevots Guest Artist Fund is named for the founder and visionary of the Dance Program at American University. Under the leadership of Prevots, the AU Dance Program hosted internationally recognized guest artists including Meredith Monk, Gus Solomons Jr., Anna Sokolow, and Twyla Tharp. With the establishment of the guest artist fund, the Dance Program continues the tradition of exposing students to emerging and veteran choreographers and teachers. The guest artist fund reflects the dance program’s commitment to providing rich and varied pre-professional experiences for students.

HONORS SOCIETY
AU’s chapter of the National Honors Society for Dance Arts (NHSDA) honors the accomplishments of outstanding undergraduate dance minors. Induction and graduation with honors are determined by artistic merit, leadership, and academic achievement. The NHSDA annual ceremony takes place each spring during the Informal Dance Showcase.
“The AU Dance Program was my home for almost four years, and I had many memorable experiences, including performing at ACDF, assistant teaching Composition of Dance I, and choreographing my peers three years in a row. But out of everything, the most valuable aspect has been the professional contacts I made through the program. I’m dancing professionally in the DC area, and my transition from student to professional dancer was smooth because of the relationships I had built with artists in residence, spring dance concert guest choreographers, and professors who are also working professionals.”

Lauren Christie, AU Dance Alumni (2012)

“I can honestly say that the Dance Program has completely changed how I feel about dance and how I approach dance. Before I came to AU, I had become completely disenchanted with dance, as my previous training only emphasized technique. At AU, not only have I furthered by technique, but I have developed the creative and inventive aspects of dance. The Dance Program at AU is like a family; both faculty and fellow students are all incredibly supportive.”

Ellie van Bever, AU Dance Alumni (2013)