

# Start on the right foot



The 7 most common mistakes  
loving mum's make when enrolling their  
child into pre-school ballet

## INTRODUCTION

- ★ Do you want to develop and foster your child's unique skill or delight in dance?
- ★ Do you want your child to learn ballet in fun and engaging ways?
- ★ Do you simply want to know if your child is cut out for ballet?
- ★ Do you find the market really confusing, the number of studios overwhelming and how do you know what will be best for your child?

**In truth, all children can dance.** Dance being a wonderfully creative solo and group activity, is also great for brain development and self expression. But, not many parents know which dance school is the best for their child, simply because they do not know what criteria to judge by.

As a parent and dance professional, I understand the dilemma of parents and have revealed seven of the most common mistakes loving adults make when enrolling their child into pre school ballet. They can mean the difference between a child that grows in confidence and one that is never quite heard or noticed, the child that this isn't afraid to try new skills and the child that misses out, afraid of making a mistake or the child that develops their imagination to share with others and the child that is unable to communicate authentically.

*Bear these mistakes in mind when choosing a toddler or preschool ballet class and you will be well on the way to having a happy and confident dancing child.*

## MISTAKE 1

# Perceive creative free dance as void of 'real learning'

Upon hearing the words 'creative' and 'free play' in a dance class, there is a tendency to imagine children running around in circles imitating dance. Many parents may not be able to understand what more their 2 year old can do while for a 4 year old it sounds rather basic. Such activity, in a class shows a lack of original thought, purpose and planning.

Form an understanding of the teaching methodology by participating in trial classes and teacher discussions to discover how they balance creativity and dance technique with modern teaching styles.

A class that focuses on the repetitive learning of steps week after week isn't inspirational or creative either. Learning dance steps is important, but is only one element of a well planned class.

At **Big Steps Little Feet** each class is different yet purposeful. The class plan is an architectural structure for experiences to occur within. This structure forms the boundaries to hold space for a roller coaster ride of highs and lows and loop-the-loops; taking children on a journey of dance discovery. The class structure gives the dancers freedom to creatively push the boundaries of what dance can possibly mean to them.

Free dancing is an essential component; whilst the children are expressing themselves wholeheartedly in movement, we are assessing their progress. If they do run around in circles, or dance the same way, on the same level consistently, it's a clear sign that we need to adjust the class content or how we present it to the children.

*Being free in dance is why we dance. It means being free to express joy, free to use humour, free from undue pressures, free to share stories, free to draw on from any of life's experience.*

## MISTAKE 2

# Not doing a trial class

It's hard to select the best dance school for your child. There are lots of schools to choose from, each with similar rhetoric yet claiming their uniqueness. What the dance schools promises to deliver is often not congruent with what you receive once enrolled, so arrange and pay for at least two trial lessons and watch at least one of the classes.

### Here are a few things to consider:

- ★ How the teacher delivers the lesson
- ★ Communication skills and choice of words
- ★ High quality teaching aids and props
- ★ Great story telling abilities
- ★ Original creative content

**Full classes often mean that the business is doing something amazing.** In toddler classes, simply join in yourself and model for your child what is expected in the class.

Children often want to watch a class in progress before feeling comfortable enough to join in. A passive trial process is totally fine and you can both sit back and sample the cleverly structured class plan and great music.

Avoid taking photos and videos distracting yourself from the real purpose of your visit. Getting involved (even from the sidelines) is an incredibly valuable tool to help you decide if this is the best class for your child.

Many parents don't realise that they have a set of needs around their child's dance class until they see them being met. We welcome you to try our classes and take note of our teaching methods, music choices, types of props, class content and fun factor. It is important to know if our values match yours.

*Our trial classes are obligation free. Let us help your child blossom into a confident, happy and expressive young dancer.*

## MISTAKE 3

# Compare their child to the other children in the class

Unintentionally, many parents will compare their child from the moment they enter their first class. They make choices for their child based on what they see in comparison to the other children. Their child may not listen or jump or skip like the others, prompting parents to decide offhand, that their child is too young or too old or just not right for the class.

Often the class is filled with children who are further along the dance journey, their ability, enthusiasm and confidence may be much higher. Each child has a unique set of needs that are to be met, they each have different reasons for being there and each child progresses at different rates even if they experience the exact same training. The most valuable thing that a parent can do is to let go of any expectations that may be projected onto the child.

At **Big Steps Little Feet**, we assist each child to develop a little more knowingness each week. Our unique 7 step method takes the children from the initial assessment through a program where technique and creativity are intuitively pitched to the level and needs of the children in the class. They move through a variety of experiences that validate, the pinnacle of which is the end of year concert and finally we transition the children into the next phase of the performing arts journey. We believe in thoroughly mastering each stage, rather than rocketing to the end result.

As the children move through our methodology, they also move through the social stages of being the baby, the middle child and eldest members of the class. The success of our classes can be witnessed when children move through these social stages and most importantly get to leader status.

*Here they have an opportunity to give back to the younger members in their class, having a profound affect on their childhood development.*

## MISTAKE 4

# Have chosen the wrong dance school

A child spontaneously bursting into movement when music heard is often the catalyst that inspires mum to sign up for dance classes. A parent may find a school from a Facebook recommendation or choose a free class, a more convenient or the cheapest dance class around. Only to find that what they have enrolled into is not for them.

### Unintentionally a parent may find themselves in a dance class that:

- ★ awkwardly overdresses children for concerts
- ★ repeats the same class over and over again
- ★ has sexualised content and costuming
- ★ has punitive teaching methods
- ★ filter the best children to excel in exams and competitions
- ★ has poor quality early childhood dance programs lacking purpose and novelty

In the unregulated dance industry, anyone can open a dance studio. It's best to select a specialised school where the director has credibility, tertiary qualifications and is actively involved in education, mentoring and evaluation of staff and teaching programs.

Follow recommendations from friends or reach out on social media, but independently seek your own information formulating a set of criteria that you need, to avoid choosing the wrong school.

**Big Steps Little Feet** is a specialist school for young children. The director Kate Barber has 20 years industry experience, a BA Dance and travels bi annually to America to work with leading early childhood dance experts. Allowing her to continually evolve as a teacher and mentor to her fully qualified teaching staff.

*We teach with metaphor, skill and joy and we hold space for children to be seen and heard. There is no hustling for attention in any of our classes, we simply celebrate and value all children.*

## MISTAKE 5

# Opt out of the end-of-year concert

The phrase 'ballet concert' is enough to send shivers of trepidation into many parents. The timing of the end of year concert often clashes with holidays and special events and push already stressed finances. For these reasons many are unable to participate. But often a parent chooses to opt out based on their own needs, be it perceived lack of value, price or low involvement levels.

**The concert is essentially for the children.** It instils confidence, sparks joy and nurtures crucial presentation skills, right from the early years. It is also a wonderful time for the teachers to present their creativity. It fires their spirit, which only gives wonderful things back to the children in their classes.

The concert is a chance to put aside personal needs and focus on the children, this can be hard. Parents are big decision makers and when it comes to concert time, it's about surrendering that decision making to another. Engaging with the process of the end of year show and the children's enthusiasm, without pressuring them in anyway is the best thing we can do.

At **Big Steps Little Feet** the hour long concert is a collaborative storytelling process involving teachers, costume designers, set designers and children and it evolves over time. It's an opportunity to stage the best of all our abilities in the highest theatrical manner and to hold space for the children to be totally and uniquely themselves. We architect a rare, un rushed childhood experience, by giving children sufficient time on stage to be immersed into the world of performance.

*The love and attention the children receive is an overwhelming form of validation. Years from now they may not remember what they did on stage, but they will certainly remember how they felt.*

## MISTAKE 6

# Over schedule children with lots of activities

Life is getting busier, parents are juggling multiple responsibilities while navigating a world full of distractions. Yet there's an amazing amount of opportunities to embrace, especially programs for children. It's not uncommon for parents to take their child to swimming, ballet and gymnastics all on their one day off work each week.

Over-scheduling is stressful and becomes a push to rush childhood. We're rushing to get everywhere, multi tasking, desire for accelerated learning and get addicted to smart devices in the process.

As children grow we add music and sport and it begins to feel like a mere bucket list of activities. Rushing from one activity to the next without taking time to authentically connect in the process is counter intuitive to the happy inspired childhood parents are trying to create. To have happy and content children we must choose an activity of value that fosters this, in the limited time that we have available.

The beauty of **Big Steps Little Feet** is the friendships that our classes create. Together with the community of engaged parents, we let kids be kids. The children know that we are there for them 100%. We take time to foster imagination and to create inspired dancers; it's a wonderful form of recuperation from the academic preparation and high consumption of technology that children are currently engaging in.

The time devoted to each class, packs a huge amount of value and provides an opportunity for children to be transported into a world of dance stories and for a moment, forget about their busy outside lives.

*What happens in class doesn't stay in class, it goes home to be reinvented for the entire family to enjoy.*

## MISTAKE 7

# Don't realise the opportunity to form life-long bonds

When a parent searches for a child's dance class, they often look at where their friends are and decide if it will fit in with work and other activities. Questions arise, what will they learn, will it be fun, will it be too hard, is it suitable for boys, or high spirited girls? Will it be a huge commitment of time and resources for something their child may only do for a little while?

What many loving parents fail to realise is that enrolling their child into a dance class is more than a skill to benefit the child. It is a fabulous opportunity to connect in meaningful ways.

The first step is finding a class that you can value, in terms of original content, skill development and teaching philosophy. Bonding with your child directly in a toddler class or indirectly (non parent participation classes) is a wonderful gift to your child. It's fun to extend the engagement beyond the class by reenacting class content at home or to find a new outfit for class.

Acknowledging just how special such shared experiences are and showing up regularly to hold space for this magical togetherness is wonderful. As parents, we can nurture childhood in many ways by disconnecting from technology, making friends with other parents and taking time to foster these friendships after class.

Lastly taking time to actually hear, see and validate your child in this activity has the most profound long term benefits.

At **Big Steps Little Feet**, we are in the heart and worthiness business - we provide classes that parents can truly value. We have a different class each week, home made props, two teachers per lesson and our signature 7 step methodology.

*We turn children into confident, joyful and expressive dancers who learn, hear and feel that they are worthy of love and belonging.*

## ABOUT BIG STEPS LITTLE FEET

Founded by Sydney based mum of two, Kate Barber. **Big Steps Little Feet** is a dance school with a very big difference.

We create dance experiences for young children of the highest value allowing busy parents to nurture and connect with the little ones they love.

We provide the highest standard in creative ballet education for all children; our methodology allows children to develop skills, grow in confidence and authentically express themselves through dance.

It really is a place where dance and imagination live happily ever after.

Kate believes happy kids are dancing kids and her goal is to become the ultimate experience architect for young dancers.

*“We create dance experiences for young children of the highest value allowing busy parents to nurture and connect with the little ones they love.”*



## JOIN BIG STEPS LITTLE FEET TODAY

Sign up for a trial pack today into one of our specialised classes in Bondi and Balmain.

Our attention to detail, funny stories and love of children will leave a long lasting impression on you and your child.

➡➡➡ To see our classes in action [click here](#) to **view a video**.

➡➡➡ [click here](#) to **sign up for a trial**.

For more information or to enquire about our membership program, specifically tailored to dedicated dancers and their families please contact:

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# BIG STEPS

*Little feet*

*Celebrating childhood since 2004*

