

EFBS – Health & Wellbeing Programme

Maximum Performance – Minimum Injury

OUR MISSION

It is our aim that our students leave EFBS with enough realistically useful knowledge to enable them to keep themselves fit and healthy for the whole of their dancing careers and beyond.

NUTRITION

Food & Nutrition Lectures:

- Nutrition lectures and advice are presented by Margaret Papoutsis, our Performance Health Consultant, who is a **BANT-Registered Nutritionist and Nutritional Therapist**. Having worked alongside dancers for her whole professional life, Margaret is uniquely qualified to understand the challenges associated with the maintenance of healthy nutrition versus weight balance.

Weight Control Advice:

- As well as basic nutritional education, students are given advice on suitable, sustainable ways of eating nutritiously whilst keeping the necessary classical aesthetic. This is especially important once the student is in a professional company, which may involve difficult touring schedules. Substandard eating habits predispose to injuries and other health problems, so good nutrition is essential for a long, injury-free professional dance career.

DISORDERED EATING

It is well-documented that ballet has an unusually high percentage of disordered eating problems. Fortunately, most dancers do not present with obvious, diagnosable Eating Disorders, such as Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia. However, there are many gradations of less dangerous eating patterns, which can have serious long-term health effects.

Lectures:

- Margaret has undertaken training from the **National Centre of Eating Disorders** (<https://eating-disorders.org.uk>) and takes these less-recognised problems very seriously. Students are given advice on recognising unhelpful eating patterns in themselves, and also guidance on tackling these problems, with professional advice, if required.

Counselling:

- For any student needing counselling in this area, referral is available privately to a qualified counsellor who was herself a dancer, and has experience with eating disorders. More serious problems will be referred to a Medical Practitioner.

MENTAL HEALTH

A Lifetime in Ballet:

- It is undeniable that any career in performance is intrinsically stressful. The experience of being 'judged and corrected' continuously during training, and when performing professionally, is - by necessity - difficult, and not suitable for every personality.
- Dancers need resilience and the ability to forge ahead in the face of the inevitable setbacks which all will experience. However, development of these required characteristics will support students in every area of their lives – present and future.

Our Approach:

- EFBS aspires to achieve a realistic balance between the discipline required for the teaching of ballet, and the support and consideration necessary for psychological well-being.
- In view of their current and past experience of international dancing careers, our teachers have a deep understanding of the pressures of performing professionally.
- Teachers are always available to discuss with students any difficulties they may be experiencing, and suggest referral to medical or counselling advice, if necessary.
- Margaret is on the register of **Integrated Medicine for Mental Health**. (<https://www.immh.org>)

DANCE MECHANICS & ANATOMY

Experience has indicated that the attention span of dancers in Anatomy lectures is very limited, especially if the subject is taught with very little relationship to matters of dance technique. Generally, dancers learn most naturally by experiencing rather than simply being 'talked at'.

Lectures:

- EFBS students have lectures, not only in Anatomy, but more importantly, in the mechanical principles which apply to ballet technique. Understanding **why** they are required to execute steps in a specific way, allows them to work more efficiently, safely and enthusiastically.
- Lectures always contain appropriate practical, experiential elements.

Exercise instruction:

- The various lessons are accompanied by instruction in exercises which are relevant to the immediate area being considered, and the associated ballet technique. This will also be invaluable should the student pursue a teaching career at a later date.
- Margaret has developed this approach for many years, and this has allowed several generations of dancers to become better performers, and eventually, better teachers themselves.

PHYSICAL & TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

Of all dance forms, Classical Ballet is the most physically demanding. The requirements for flexibility, strength, co-ordination and bodily aesthetics are extraordinarily high. Very few bodies are naturally endowed with these characteristics, and all dancers are likely to face physical challenges and restrictions. Recognising these as soon as possible in training provides the best chance of improving technique and reducing injury.

Observation:

- All students are continuously observed by EFBS teachers in class.
- Referred to Margaret Papoutsis for assessment if problems are recognised.
- Margaret regularly observes the students in class. This situation allows her unprecedented opportunities for 'dynamic assessment' – an area usually unavailable to practitioners of any type.

Assessment:

- All students are entitled to one assessment by Margaret Papoutsis, free of charge. Such an assessment can reveal both current and potential challenges.
- Advice and individualised exercises are normally offered to the student in a form which can be permanently available on any mobile device.
- Margaret is in continuing dialogue with the teachers, allowing for the very best attention to both health and technical matters.
- If required, extra assessment sessions are available privately.

Reports:

- A written report giving advice regarding classwork is always copied to EFBS staff, the student and parents (if under 18 years of age).
- **Please note** that once a student reaches the age of 18, they are legally required to complete and sign a new GDPR form, specifically allowing parents access to any medical reports (please contact the Principal for further information).

Referral:

- When appropriate, the student may be referred onto another practitioner, GP or Hospital. EFBS has contact with both an osteopath and physiotherapist who work locally. Most importantly, both have a degree of experience working with dancers.
- Should the student wish to attend another practitioner/Pilates instructor/exercise therapist/gym, they are required to first obtain permission from the EFBS Principal – Johan Christensen; or Margaret Papoutsis.
- **All our teachers have completed training in Child Protection & Sports First Aid.**