

## Cecchetti Ballet Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet?

- Established by ENRICO CECCHETTI (1850 – 1928) an internationally renowned dancer and teacher who performed throughout Europe and America. He was the Ballet Master for Ballets Russes and instituted System of Examinations for ballet training.
- The Cecchetti system offers a sequence of grades (levels of ballet study), carefully measured as to degree of difficulty and physical development, and provides a system of accredited examinations to test the students' proficiency within those grades.
- Cecchetti provides a consistent progression of material and vertical alignment. This system is scientifically based and age/advancement appropriate.

### When is the Cecchetti Method taught at SMH?

- Montessori through Form 2: Montessori through pre-ballet classes ready students for Cecchetti training.
- Forms 3-5: The Saint Mary's Hall Dance program uses the standards and method of ballet training established by Cav. Enrico Cecchetti for lower school ballet classes (in-school) and select after school ballet classes.
- Middle and Upper School: After school Cecchetti Ballet classes are available to Middle and Upper School students who are interested in continuing their Cecchetti studies. In-school dance and non-Cecchetti classes expose dancers to other important forms of dance.

### What SMH teachers use the Cecchetti method of teaching ballet?

- Marcia Holliman
- Cheryl Merlock
- Dr. Kathleen Tenniswood (Workshops)
- Vanessa Bessler also uses Cecchetti in teaching ballet, as well as other accepted ballet methods.

### Explanation of Cecchetti Grade Levels

#### (Offered through the After School Dance program at SMH)

- *Cecchetti Grade Levels are not the same as school grade/form levels.*
- *Each grade level generally takes one to two years to complete.*
- Each grade level requires students to take class for at least two sessions per week.

**Grade I**-for beginning Cecchetti students, traditionally in Forms 3-6 (by SMH Form 4, many students who began Grade 1 during Form 3 are preparing to take their Grade I exam.)

**Grade II**-for students who have passed the Grade One Cecchetti Exam

**Grade III**-for students who have passed the Grade Two Cecchetti Exam

**Grade IV**-for students who have passed the Grade Three Cecchetti Exam

**Grade V**-for students who have passed the Grade Four Cecchetti Exam

**Grade VI**-for students who have passed the Grade Five Cecchetti Exam

**Grade VII**-top grade level taught at SMH, for students who have passed the Grade VI exam. Students at this level are preprofessional Upper School dancers

### **Will My Child be in Class with Her Friends as She Progresses Through the Cecchetti Grade Levels?**

- The Cecchetti System is designed to be a rigorous training system and is not form level based, but is instead based on the students' individual readiness and aptitude. Just as children mature at varying speeds, or read at different ages, so to will they advance through the Cecchetti Grade Levels at varying times.
- Additionally, as noted, there is a difference between in-school and after school training. The after school Cecchetti Grade Level classes are geared for passing exams and most students who are interested in a serious study of ballet take both in-school and after school dance. It is difficult for students who are only studying in-school dance to be ready to pass exams with the same speed as students who are enrolled in additional classes after school.

### **When is Pointe introduced in the Cecchetti System?**

- Students who have reached the Cecchetti Grade Level of Grade III may be referred by their teacher to study Pointe in addition to their regular ballet study. To ensure the safety of the students, this is done on an individual basis. Please refer any questions on Pointe readiness to your teacher.

### **Examinations**

- Provide a means for outside evaluation of teachers and students based on an international standard of performance
- Conducted in each level of training under the auspices of the Cecchetti Council of America Examining Board
- Offered at Saint Mary's Hall annually in June and offered by the Southwest Committee annually in March and October. The March and October exams generally do not take place in San Antonio; transportation and associated costs will vary.
- The SMH Cecchetti teachers advise parents individually on the students' readiness for exams.

### **June Cecchetti Workshop and Examinations**

- SMH teachers encourage students to plan to take exams in June for their personal development.
- Preparation for the June examinations takes place during the two week summer course at SMH. Students in Forms 3-5 who have been studying in-school or after school will refine their techniques in a variety of dance forms and prepare for the examination.
- Students will be notified at the end of the first week (on June 5) if they are ready to take the exam and will be provided registration forms for the examinations at that time.
- Teachers will communicate directly with parents on exam schedule, expectations, and requirements
- There is a charge to take the Cecchetti exam. Checks are payable to Saint Mary's Hall and fees are variable according to grade level.
- Students who need a little more time will be encouraged to wait until the October examinations.

- The 2009 June exams are on June 12 and 13 at SMH.
- Lower School students who have passed an exam are presented with a Cecchetti badge for their SMH School Tie in an annual ceremony during Morning Moments.

#### **Additional Cecchetti Training and Workshops**

- All SMH dance teachers offer private lessons at SMH when studios are not being used. If you are interested in private lessons at SMH, please contact the teacher or the Director of Fine Arts (information below).
- Some SMH teachers also offer lessons in private off campus studios. These lessons are not under the oversight of SMH.
- After School teacher Marcia Holliman and Workshop leader Kathleen Tenniswood teach at Cecchetti workshops all over the country. They make the information available to students who may be interested, but these workshops are not required and are not affiliated with SMH.

#### **More Information**

- For more information on the Cecchetti Method or the Cecchetti Council of America, visit their website at [www.cecchetti.org](http://www.cecchetti.org)
- For the SMH dance class schedule, more information on Cecchetti, non-Cecchetti ballet, teacher bios, and other offerings in dance at Saint Mary's Hall visit [www.smhall.org](http://www.smhall.org)