



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS  
IN EDUCATION

# MILLENNIUM DANCE 2000 THEATRE SCHOOL

**Inspection of dance and drama schools in receipt of awards allocated by the  
Department for Education and Skills**

This inspection was carried out by OFSTED under section 62 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. It was a joint inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

Telephone: 020 7421 6800

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**MILLENNIUM DANCE 2000  
THEATRE SCHOOL  
INSPECTION REPORT**

**Inspection: May 2002**

## Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Millennium Dance 2000 Theatre School
Type of college:	Dance/musical theatre college
Directors:	Ikky Maas Donald McLennan Jacki Mitchell
Address of college:	Hampstead Town Hall London NW3 4QP
Telephone number:	0207 916 9335
Fax number:	0207 916 9334
Name of reporting inspector:	David Hornbrook HMI
Date of inspection:	May 2002

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## **Part A: Summary**

### **Information about the school**

The Millennium Dance 2000 Theatre School is a performing arts school in Belsize Park, north London. It offers a three-year, full-time, professional diploma in performance, and the national diplomas in dance and dance (musical theatre). The school had a successful threshold visit in 2001 and was accepted onto the awards scheme.

The school has expanded substantially since its foundation in 1997. It moved to its present location in the new Interchange arts complex in the old Hampstead Town Hall in 2000. The school shares its accommodation with a range of other arts and charitable organisations.

At the time of the inspection in May 2002, there were 84 students enrolled on the three-year diploma in performance. Some 17 students out of 46 in the first year of the course, two out of 25 in the second year and one out of 13 in the third year were in receipt of Department for Education and Skills (DfES) dance and drama awards. Some 400 students were auditioned in 2002, about 45 of whom will be offered places.

The school is jointly run by its three directors. There is also a full-time executive administrator. All the 22 teachers are part time. In addition, there are seven accompanists and a number of guest teachers who visit the school on a weekly basis. The Millennium Dance 2000 Theatre School is a limited company.

### **How effective is the school?**

#### ***Key strengths***

- a clear vision and sense of purpose
- some outstanding teaching
- excellent links with the performing arts industry
- strong professional ethos
- effective development of students as skilled and confident performers
- high levels of achievement in Matt Mattox jazz technique
- strong, effective leadership
- strong commitment to equality of opportunity.

***What should be improved?***

- student retention
- provision for drama
- documentation of strategic and operational plans
- the monitoring of the school's performance
- access to books, videos and information technology (IT).

**Students' views of the school**

Students' views of the school were taken into account and are summarised below.

***What students like about the college***

- the good teaching
- the good support and concern for students' welfare
- good studios
- teachers with strong industry links.

***What they felt could be improved***

- students' access to accommodation in the evenings
- common room facilities
- the width of the jazz curriculum
- the cohesion of the musical theatre curriculum.

**Part B: The three-year dance and drama course**

Inspectors judged the provision to be **good (grade 2)**

Inspectors observed 16 classes, which were graded on a seven-point scale for teaching and learning.

**Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Teaching</b>	<b>Learning</b>
1	2	—
2	10	10
3	2	5
4	1	—
5	1	1
6	—	—
7	—	—

*Key: The range of grades includes: excellent (grade 1), very good (grade 2), good (grade 3), satisfactory (grade 4), unsatisfactory (grade 5), poor (grade 6) and very poor (grade 7).*

**Strengths**

- some outstanding teaching
- excellent links with the performing arts industry
- strong professional ethos
- effective development of students as skilled and confident performers
- high levels of achievement in Matt Mattox jazz technique.

**Weaknesses**

- low retention
- unsatisfactory drama provision
- poor access to books, videos and IT.

**Scope of provision**

1. The course aims to prepare students for careers in dance and musical theatre by providing them with 'a variety of differing yet co-ordinated techniques'. The school aims to foster creativity and understanding alongside the development of performance techniques in dance, drama and singing. Core subjects are jazz, ballet, contemporary dance, tap, singing and drama. Additional subjects include history of dance and musical theatre, drama improvisation, make-up and production. Students are entered for the national diploma in professional dance and the national diploma in professional dance (musical theatre).
2. There are adequate opportunities for students to perform in front of an audience. The school mounts an in-house Christmas cabaret and two annual productions in London theatres. Additionally, students are encouraged to audition to join the National Youth Dance company. A few students have taken part in professional productions.

**Achievements and standards**

3. Students are achieving high standards of performance. In classes they are well-focused, enthusiastic and energetic and they demonstrate in abundance the confidence necessary to perform. Although students often enter the school with poor muscle tone and flexibility, by the time they graduate they have reached appropriate standards for entry to the profession. Levels of achievement in Matt Mattox jazz, a particular strength of the school, is high. Standards in tap are high. Standards in singing vary, but are satisfactory overall. Retention is low; fewer than half those enrolled in 1999 have continued to their third year.
4. Most students leaving the course gain employment. Contact with guest choreographers and directors during workshops at the school sometimes leads to offers of contracts before graduation. In recent years, first destinations have included contemporary dance companies and West End and touring musical shows.

**Quality of education and training**

5. Nearly all the teaching is good, or very good, and some teaching is outstanding. Teachers demand a lot of students, often pushing them to their physical and mental limits, and most classes are vibrant and productive. In an inspiring, high-energy, first-year jazz class, students learned to locate a dance style in a historical period and how to incorporate elements of their drama training into their dance. Students in a singing class, who were expected to sing solo in front of the class, were given practical advice about how to overcome their panic by correcting posture and focusing on the intention of the song. The teacher also gave a very clear description of changing registers, which he likened to speaking. In each subject, students are grouped according to their ability. This arrangement works well. It helps students to work to their capacity and make good progress. Students are very well motivated and have a highly professional approach to their training.
6. Most teachers have had extensive professional experience. The school has excellent links with the performing arts industry and several teachers are practising music or rehearsal directors. The school frequently invites performers, directors and choreographers from dance companies and West End shows as guest teachers. Dance studios are light, well ventilated and of a good size. The main hall is a good, technically equipped, performance space, but it

has a very slippery dance floor. The school has a comprehensive collection of musical scores, but there are few books and videotapes. Students have insufficient access to IT because the school has to rely on a shared facility. They are able to write their curricula vitae on a computer in the school office when it is free. The school uses its accompanists in an effective and imaginative way. The use of a percussionist in jazz, for example, makes a significant contribution to the lively and productive atmosphere in these classes.

7. Progress is monitored informally throughout the year, and there is formal assessment in the autumn and winter terms. Assessments cover the core subjects and they are internally and externally monitored. Students receive a written report of how they have done in their assessments. The students are required to keep journals, which are also assessed. The amount of time and energy which students put into these journals varies substantially. The purpose, content and size of the journals are not clearly enough defined.

8. The content of the course is appropriately comprehensive. A key focus of the curriculum is the Matt Mattox jazz technique. This is a strength of the school, but the dominance of the one technique means that other styles are sometimes neglected. Apart from sessions in which students are preparing for school performances, there are few opportunities to bring together all the elements of musical theatre by combining acting and singing with dance routines. Students would benefit from more body conditioning. Drama provision is unsatisfactory. The drama programme lacks coherence and there is no obvious relationship between the published curriculum and activities in classes. Progression routes and outcomes are unclear and it is not apparent how students are supposed to develop the drama skills necessary to complement those they are gaining in dance and singing. The school is aware of these weaknesses and a new head of drama has been appointed. There is, however, no documentation outlining how the weaknesses are to be addressed.

9. Auditions are appropriately conducted. Candidates take part in classes in ballet, contemporary dance and jazz and are required to sing and perform a monologue. They are interviewed by the directors. They may also be referred for orthopaedic assessment. Criteria for acceptance as students are not documented in sufficient detail.

10. Teachers are encouraging and supportive of students at all stages of their development. The executive administrator is responsible for students' welfare, although the three directors also give a lot of informal support and guidance. There is no formal tutorial system, but the small size of the school allows informal arrangements to work reasonably well and students are happy with the care that is available to them. More systematic tutoring arrangements will need to be considered if the school increases in size. The school handbook is given to staff and is available to students. The students are given informal guidance as to what is expected of them. Arrangements for the care of dancers with injuries are satisfactory. The first point of contact for injury is the executive administrator who, although she has no formal medical training, was trained as a dancer and a teacher, and has many years' experience. If necessary, the school sends students to a recommended physiotherapist. The executive administrator also gives rehabilitation body conditioning classes and monitors students' recovery.

11. Students are well prepared for entry into employment. Some classes are run on the lines of professional auditions and students are asked to prepare a song or monologue as if auditioning for a particular production. Agents attend the school's performances. Guest teachers who are still active within the profession give suggestions to students about possible employment opportunities.

## Part C: Leadership and management

Inspectors judged leadership and management to be **good (grade 2)**

### Strengths

- a clear vision and sense of purpose
- strong, effective leadership
- impressive commitment to equality of opportunity.

### Weakness

- insufficient documentation of strategic and operational plans
- underdeveloped quality assurance.

12. This is the first inspection of the school since it was accepted onto the awards scheme in 2001. Founded by the present directors, the school is less than five years old and is successfully building its reputation. In 2002, the number of applicants increased by 60% on the previous year. Its move into the Interchange arts complex in the old Hampstead Town Hall in 2000 has considerably enhanced its accommodation and improved students' access to a range of facilities.

13. The school has a clear vision and sense of purpose. The three directors own and run the school and are the only shareholders. They are experienced professional performers and educators, and collectively they provide the school with strong and effective leadership. Each director takes responsibility for an aspect of the curriculum, covering ballet, contemporary dance, jazz and musical theatre. All lines of accountability lead back to them. The directors share a readily accessible office and function effectively as a senior management team. They are assisted by a small advisory group of well-known performers who are on hand to give advice and to help with assessments. In addition, there are part-time heads of acting and singing, and a full-time executive administrator with a wide range of responsibilities.

14. The part-time heads of department have no administrative hours allocated to them, but are paid at a slightly higher rate to compensate for their additional duties. The directors meet with the staff at least once a term, but otherwise there are no regular staff meetings at school or departmental level. When staff do meet, there are no minutes of the meetings and no records of the actions it has been decided to take. The small size and compact location of the school have so far enabled the directors to communicate easily with their part-time staff, and the operational management of the course is satisfactory. Financial records and student records are properly maintained. However, as the school grows and consolidates, there will be an increasing need to regularise existing informal management arrangements to ensure that strategic and operational priorities are clear and widely understood. At present, too much is invested in an implicit consensus between the three directors.

15. The school's health and safety procedures are satisfactory and set out within the context of those for the Interchange arts complex as a whole. The school has comprehensive policies and codes of practice for equality of opportunity. These are available to staff and students in the school's handbook. The school's commitment to equal opportunities is evident in the high proportion of teachers from minority ethnic groups, in its attempts to increase the number of students from minority ethnic groups and in the fact that all the school's accommodation is accessible to people with restricted mobility.

16. Quality assurance arrangements are underdeveloped. The directors monitor the school's work on an informal basis and are concerned to ensure that standards of teaching are high. The school conscientiously tracks students' employment destinations. Students' journals provide directors with some feedback on the course. However, there is no formal process for eliciting the views of students, and there are no procedures for identifying weaknesses and developing strategies for tackling them. The self-assessment report, for example, identifies only the organisation's perceived strengths.

17. The school manages its resources efficiently. Financial matters are monitored carefully by the directors, who receive monthly financial statements from their book-keeper. Budgets are set for productions and the directors approve requests for teaching resources. The school takes appropriate steps to secure value for money when purchasing consumables and small equipment.