GENERAL

marilyn hotchkiss ballroom dancing and charm school

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Marilyn Hotchkiss Ballroom Dancing and Charm School: A Journey of Elegance, Confidence, and Artistic Expression

In a world where self presentation and personal confidence are increasingly valued, a place that blends the grace of ballroom dance with the subtle art of charm can be transformative. **Marilyn Hotchkiss Ballroom Dancing and Charm School**(often shortened to BACS) offers just that—a unique blend of dance instruction, etiquette training, and confidence building that turns ordinary individuals into polished, poised performers. Whether you're a seasoned dancer looking to refine your technique, a shy newcomer eager to feel more self assured, or a professional seeking to add a touch of flair to your public appearances, BACS provides a comprehensive curriculum that nurtures both body and spirit.

Who Is Marilyn Hotchkiss?

Marilyn Hotchkiss is a seasoned dance instructor, etiquette coach, and lifelong educator who has devoted more than three decades to the art of movement and social grace. Born in 1958 in the bustling city of Chicago, Marilyn grew up surrounded by the rhythm of jazz and the elegance of classic dance. Her early exposure to dance sparked a passion that would eventually lead her to study at the prestigious New York Institute of the Arts, where she specialized in ballroom and Latin dance styles.

Beyond her technical expertise, Marilyn's true gift lies in her ability to connect with students on a personal level. She believes that dance is not merely a series of steps but a language that conveys confidence, charisma, and authenticity. This philosophy guided her in establishing the Ballroom Dancing and Charm School in 1995, a place that has since become a cornerstone of the local performing arts community.

Founding the Ballroom Dancing and Charm School

When Marilyn first opened the doors to BACS, the vision was clear: create a space where students could learn the fundamentals of ballroom dance while simultaneously cultivating social poise and self assurance. The school's original location, a charming loft in downtown Chicago, was chosen for its spaciousness and its ability to inspire creativity. Over the years, BACS has expanded its offerings, added new instructors, and moved to a larger, purpose-built facility that includes state of the art dance studios, a full length mirror wall, a small stage, and a dedicated etiquette lounge.

Despite the growth, Marilyn's commitment to personalized instruction remains unwavering. She personally mentors a select group of students each semester, ensuring that every participant receives tailored guidance to help them reach their full potential.

Core Mission and Vision

- Empowerment through Movement: Teaching dance as a vehicle for confidence, resilience, and self expression.
- Holistic Etiquette: Integrating social grace, communication skills, and personal branding into the curriculum.
- Community Building: Fostering a supportive environment where students uplift one another.
- Excellence and Integrity: Maintaining high standards of instruction and ethical practice.

Curriculum Overview: From Footwork to Charisma

BACS offers a tiered program structure that caters to beginners, intermediate dancers, and advanced performers. Each level is thoughtfully designed to build upon previous skills while introducing new challenges that keep students engaged and motivated.

Beginner Level: Foundations of Dance and Etiquette

At this entry level, students learn the essential footwork of the waltz, foxtrot, and basic Latin steps. The curriculum also introduces fundamental principles of posture, balance, and rhythm. In parallel, the etiquette component covers basic social interactions, table manners, and introductory communication techniques. Students practice greeting etiquette, proper handshake, and the art of small talk—skills that are invaluable both on and off the dance floor.

Intermediate Level: Technique Refinement and Advanced Social Skills

Students progress to more complex dance styles such as the tango, samba, and quickstep. The curriculum emphasizes musicality, timing, and the development of a personal dance style. Etiquette training at this level focuses on dress codes for various occasions, effective public speaking, and the subtle art of body language.

Advanced Level: Performance Excellence and Personal Branding

Advanced students refine their technique to a professional standard, mastering intricate footwork, turns, and lifts. They also prepare for performance opportunities such as local dance competitions and community events. The etiquette module expands into advanced topics such as networking strategies, leadership presence, and media engagement. Students learn how to craft a personal brand that reflects their unique personality and values.

Specialized Workshops and Guest Lectures

Throughout the year, BACS hosts a series of workshops featuring guest instructors from the world of dance, fashion, and public relations. These sessions cover topics like “The Power of Personal Presence,” “Fashion for the Modern Dancer,” and “Dance as a Tool for Career Advancement.” Each workshop is designed to complement the core curriculum and provide students with a well-rounded learning experience.

Teaching Philosophy & Methods

Marilyn Hotchkiss’s teaching philosophy revolves around the belief that confidence is cultivated through practice, feedback, and a supportive learning environment. She employs a blend of traditional dance instruction and modern pedagogical techniques to create a dynamic classroom experience.

Individualized Instruction

Every student receives personalized attention through one on one coaching sessions. Marilyn assesses each learner’s strengths, weaknesses, and learning style to tailor lessons that maximize progress. This individualized approach ensures that even students with limited prior experience can thrive.

Positive Reinforcement and Constructive Critique

Feedback at BACS is balanced—students are praised for their achievements while also receiving constructive guidance to improve technique. This approach fosters a growth mindset and encourages continuous improvement.

Integration of Technology

The school utilizes video playback for self assessment, motion capture tools for precision training, and online platforms for scheduling, progress tracking, and community engagement. These technological tools enhance the learning experience and provide students with a modern, interactive environment.

Student Success Stories

Over the years, BACS has produced a diverse range of success stories that exemplify the transformative power of dance and etiquette training. Below are a few notable examples:

Case Study 1: From Introvert to Stage Star

Sarah, a 28 year old graphic designer, joined BACS as a beginner. She struggled with public speaking and often felt nervous in social settings. After completing the intermediate program, Sarah not only mastered the tango but also developed the confidence to present her work at industry conferences. She credits Marilyn's focus on body language and vocal clarity for her newfound poise.

Case Study 2: Business Leader with a Graceful Presence

Michael, a 45 year old entrepreneur, enrolled in the advanced program to refine his public speaking and networking skills. By integrating ballroom dance into his daily routine, he improved his posture, eye contact, and overall presence. Within six months, his company secured a major partnership, and he was invited to speak at a national business summit—an achievement he attributes to the confidence gained at BACS.

Case Study 3: Competitive Dancer's Journey to International Recognition

Emily, a 16 year old dancer, joined BACS to supplement her existing dance training. She honed her technique in both ballroom and Latin styles, winning regional competitions and eventually earning a scholarship to a prestigious dance academy abroad. Emily's story highlights how BACS's comprehensive curriculum can serve as a springboard for aspiring professionals.

Facilities & Location

BACS is located in a modern, purpose built facility on Oak Street, just a few blocks from downtown Chicago. The campus includes:

- Two Full Size Dance Studios: Equipped with sprung hardwood floors, mirrors, and acoustic panels.
- Etiquette Lounge: A comfortable space for students to practice social skills, hold mock interviews, and receive coaching.
- Performance Stage: A 30 foot stage with lighting and sound equipment for recitals and showcases.
- Fitness & Conditioning Area: A gym with cardio machines, resistance equipment, and yoga mats to support overall fitness.
- Private Classrooms: For seminars, workshops, and individual coaching sessions.

Enrollment Process & Fees

Enrollment at BACS follows a straightforward, student friendly process. Here's how it works:

1. Initial Consultation: Prospective students schedule a free 30 minute consultation with Marilyn or an admissions specialist.
2. Assessment: A short dance and etiquette assessment determines the appropriate program level.
3. Application: Students complete an online application form, providing personal details and preferred scheduling.
4. Payment: Tuition is payable in full or via an installment plan. Scholarships and financial aid are available for qualifying students.
5. Orientation: New students attend an orientation session that covers curriculum, policies, and facility tours.

Tuition Structure (2026 Rates):

- Beginner Level: $1,200 per semester (12 weeks)
- Intermediate Level: $1,500 per semester
- Advanced Level: $1,800 per semester
- Specialized Workshops: $200 per session

Discounts are offered for siblings, early payment, and long term enrollment commitments. Contact the admissions office for detailed pricing and financial assistance options.

Testimonials & Reviews

Here are some recent testimonials from BACS students and alumni:

- "BACS helped me find my voice, both on the dance floor and in my career. The confidence I gained has been priceless." – Anna L.
- "The combination of dance and etiquette is unique. I've met people who truly appreciate the art of presence." – David M.
- "Marilyn's coaching style is encouraging and precise. I've improved my technique faster than I expected." – Riley T.

Frequently Asked Questions

What age groups does BACS serve?

Students from 8 to 65 years old are welcome. The curriculum is adapted to suit different age groups, ensuring age appropriate instruction and safety.

Do I need prior dance experience?

No prior experience is required for the beginner program. However, students who have danced before may benefit from the intermediate or advanced levels.

What attire is required for classes?

Students are encouraged to wear comfortable athletic clothing, dance shoes (or non slip footwear if dance shoes are not available), and a water bottle. For certain advanced classes, students may be asked to wear specific attire that aligns with the dance style or performance requirements.

How can I schedule a trial class?

Visit the trial class page or contact the admissions office to book a free trial session.

Is there a community event or showcase?

Yes! BACS hosts an annual showcase where students perform a variety of dance styles. The event is open to the public and provides an excellent platform for students to display their progress.

Conclusion

Marilyn Hotchkiss Ballroom Dancing and Charm School is more than just a dance studio; it's a transformative experience that blends the elegance of ballroom with the subtle power of social grace. Whether you aim to refine your dance technique, cultivate confidence, or master the art of charm, BACS offers a comprehensive, supportive environment that nurtures growth at every step. By investing in yourself through dance and etiquette, you unlock a world of opportunities—both personally and professionally—where confidence, poise

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