

#BoysDanceToo: At The Rose Studios for Youth Artists it's a growing trend among students

Kori Radloff The Rose Theater

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Britain's Prince George made headlines when his father Prince William shared that the young royal loves his ballet classes, sparking conversation about boys' dance.

The importance dance and movement can have in students' lives came as no surprise to those at The Rose, especially for artist educator Michael James, who leads The Rose's Boys Athletic Dance (B.A.D.) classes. The program is growing by leaps and bounds at the theater's educational facility, The Rose Studios for Youth Artists.

"Dance training is beneficial to a student's overall health. It increases flexibility, coordination, balance, endurance and posture," says James. "These are all things that are not only beneficial in dance but in all aspects of life as young people grow into adults."

James notes that the benefits of dance are not limited only to girls.

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"Boys dance courses focus on building strong muscles, self-esteem, confidence and teamwork while also encouraging creativity and self-expression," he says. "Dance is a form of exercise and requires the same amount of energy as playing a sport. It's beneficial to the athlete who needs that coordination and flexibility to improve upon their athletic endeavors but also is great for the future dancer or Broadway star hoping to make it on the big stage."

The Rose's program works to erase the stigma of boys dance by providing unique, male-only classes that focus on strength-building and coordination in an environment that encourages camaraderie and personal development.

"We found that boys often felt ignored in traditional courses focused on females. The boys were left to figure out which aspect of the training is for their benefit as opposed to their female counterparts," says James. "Taking a boys-centered dance course builds that sport like camaraderie that most boys crave."



Over the past few years, interest in the B.A.D. program has grown from just a handful of students to more than 30 dancers, ranging in age from 6 to 18, with more on a waitlist.

THE ROSE THEATER

The male-only classroom provided in the B.A.D. program allows James to focus on the specific needs of the students, addressing the different ways that boys develop, both mentally and physically. The result is a community that allows young people a space to express themselves and embrace all sides of their personalities. “We’ve created an atmosphere at our studio that creates a safe space for the boys and makes them feel included,” says James.

Over the past few years, interest in the B.A.D. program has grown from just a handful of students to more than 30 dancers, ranging in age from 6 to 18, with more on a waitlist. Their interests vary; some are focused on theater skills, but others are also using dance to enhance their abilities on the athletic field.

“I train football players, baseball players, basketball players and wrestlers,” says James.

James knows that his students all have different aspirations as participants in the B.A.D. classes. His approach to dance as a healthy way to increase stamina and flexibility allows students to benefit from a sports-like bonding with other boys that might typically be seen on the athletic field. Beyond dance skills, however, James is also teaching vital life skills: self-confidence, communication, teamwork, perseverance and standing up for what you want in life.

“A brotherhood has been formed between these boys who have grown up together under one common goal, to be themselves and do what they love,” says James. “We are developing a new generation of boys who look at dance as a skill to be learned and not a stereotype to be

avoided.”

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