

DDMIX and CPD

Katherine Richardson answers questions on her RAD training, working with DDMIX, and how it fits into CPD.

Katherine Richardson, Principal BA (Hons) LRAD, ARAD

Having trained at the Royal Academy of Dance for three years, gaining a BA in the Art and



Teaching of Ballet, Katherine has taught at several schools around London, including the Central School of Ballet. She continues to mentor several students from the RAD studying to be teachers. Most recently she has been working on a brand new dance fitness class, DDMIX, which has been set up by Darcey Bussell. Katherine is delighted to be working closely with her.

Katherine has been the principal of The Village School of Dance in Wimbledon Village for eight years, and has developed the school from what was just three classes on a Thursday afternoon to the thriving school that it is today!

First things

What is your dance background?

I have danced since I was three years old, studying ballet, modern and tap. Having trained at a dance school in Cheshire, I also attended classes at the Northern Ballet School, and was a junior associate of the Royal Ballet. I then achieved a scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Dance. After three years, I achieved my Advanced 2 Ballet, Licenciate and a BA (hons) degree in the art and teaching of ballet.

Where and when did you start dancing?

I started dancing at the local village ballet school where I lived in Cheshire and moved on to a bigger dance school. Here I had excellent training and worked towards passing all my grades in ballet, tap and modern including the vocational levels. I was also given the opportunity to take classes at the Northern Ballet in Manchester.

Are you RAD trained through and through?

RAD is the only ballet syllabus I have ever known, and having learnt it as a student and now teaching it in my school, I consider it the best syllabus to create the most successful dancer.

Who or what inspired you to teach? How did you establish The Village School of Dance?

I have loved dancing and performing since I was very young. I was inspired by my dance teacher. She was brilliant and gave me the confidence and encouragement I needed to pursue a career in ballet.

I worked for the owner of what is now The Village School of Dance as soon as I graduated from the RAD. At that time, it was only running one day a week for just a few hours. My boss had an additional dance school elsewhere in London, so I was given free rein to run the classes. Having created a good relationship with the children and parents, I was then able to add more hours to the timetable. Once the owner put it up for sale in Autumn 2007, I felt it was too good an opportunity to miss and bought the school myself. It now runs five days a week across three venues in Wimbledon and we have three teachers. With many dance schools already established in Wimbledon, it has taken a while to really get the recognition but in time, we have developed an excellent reputation and we finally feel 'on the map'!

DDMIX

As an RAD Registered Teacher, did you find the DDMIX training easier or harder do you think than others? Why was that?

I think, generally, I found the DDMIX instructor training easy to pick up due to my dance background. Due to its high intensity, it is different to teaching ballet but that's why I love it! It is extremely well structured both for the teacher as well as the client. It was so refreshing to learn something new that got my heart rate going at the same time as doing what I love, dancing.

How easy was it to establish yourself as a DDMIX instructor alongside your teaching?

It was pretty easy to establish myself as a DDMIX instructor as the beauty of DDMIX is that you can teach it to adults during the day. My school doesn't open until after school for the children so DDMIX allowed me to teach in the mornings. A DDMIX class is set to 45-60 minutes so it was very easy to find that time slot to fit in with the clients as well as myself.

What has becoming a DDMIX instructor done for your business in dance in terms of being a new opportunity?

Having the school has allowed me to start classes easily as I already had the clientele in the parents of the children I teach. It then spread, word of mouth. The DDMIX class has also helped with my profile within Wimbledon Village, gaining more interest in the school.

How does DDMIX complement and benefit your teaching as an RAD member, and help in building your own brand?

DDMIX has given me more energy, physically as well as mentally to expand the opportunities of the school. With the increased recognition that DDMIX provides, widening my clientele, it has definitely helped develop The Village School of Dance. I have introduced it to some of the children of the school which they love and we have even been given the opportunity to take part in a dance event with Darcey in London. This was a great opportunity for the school as well as the children.

What has becoming a DDMIX instructor provided for you personally – in terms of your own personal and professional development?

Without a doubt, it has given me more confidence in what I can achieve within my school. It has certainly made me a lot fitter and has inspired me to develop the school even more. Since teaching DDMIX, we have re-branded the school and we are about to launch a brand new website. So it has definitely inspired and re-energised the growth of the school.

How has DDMIX contributed to your involvement in the dance teaching profession?

Working with Darcey has been a fantastic opportunity and has certainly given me more confidence as a dance teacher. DDMIX allows you teach a variety of styles which in turn gives you a better knowledge of what is out there in terms of dance.

What do opportunities like DDMIX provide for dance teachers?

DDMIX provides a brand new and refreshing avenue for dance teachers out there to enter the dance fitness world, doing what they love. Working with Darcey is an invaluable opportunity and she is completely inspiring to a dance teacher for obvious reasons, as well as how passionate she is about DDMIX. Running the classes allows your school to expand its clientele as well as offering you variety in your dance teaching.

CPD

As an Endorsed Provider, did the DDMIX training count towards your own CPD requirement? How was that useful as an RAD member?

It was actually the need to fulfil my CPD hours that initially pushed me to take the first DDMIX instructor course! It is a great way to gain your CPD hours. To be a good DDMIX instructor, it is imperative to keep up the training so not only does this contribute to the CPD hours but it also encourages you to be a better instructor.

How important is CPD to you as a dance professional?

As a principal of a dance school offering the RAD syllabus, it is crucial. I strive to ensure that my school offers the highest quality in dance teaching and CPD enables me to do this.

How does CPD equip and supplement your teaching?

CPD ensures that you are up to date with areas of the profession, such as new syllabi, which undoubtedly means that my students/clients are getting the proper instruction. CPD also creates awareness of a wide range of aspects concerned with dance teaching such as first aid, child safety etc.

What would you say to other RAD members that are thinking about doing a DDMIX workshop to become an instructor?

I would say go for it! It's not only an excellent way to expand your dance school but personally, it inspires you to push yourself mentally and physically. I also think I'm the fittest I've ever been!