

# ELEVATE

PERFORMING ARTS COMPANY

Program Information Packet  
2026–2027 Season



**sing • dance • act • belong**

[www.BalanceDanceStudios.com](http://www.BalanceDanceStudios.com)

# WELCOME TO ELEVATE

## A Musical Theatre Training & Performance Company

Elevate Performing Arts Company is Balance Dance Studios' **musical theatre program** for youth performers who are ready to grow – artistically, creatively, and collaboratively. Built on **integrated training in singing, acting, & movement**, Elevate offers students meaningful performance opportunities within a supportive, ensemble-driven community.

As Balance Dance Studios enters into an exciting new chapter, including a new performing arts complex, complete with a 430 seat theatre, we are intentionally expanding and refining Elevate to meet growing interest and demand.

Elevate offers a musical theatre company that bridges **training and performance**, balances **clear expectations with joy**, and offers thoughtful pathways for performers at **different ages and stages**.

At Elevate, training is taken seriously. Rehearsals are focused, purposeful, and collaborative. At the same time, we believe **young artists thrive when they feel supported, connected, and inspired to take creative risks**. We value curiosity alongside discipline, growth alongside accountability, and the magic that happens when young artists create - together!

At Elevate, students don't just attend classes. They train, rehearse, perform, and grow together, learning what it means to be part of a theatre company rooted in both excellence *and* heart.



# THE ELEVATE PATHWAYS

## Three Pathways. One Connected Ensemble.

Elevate offers thoughtfully designed pathways that support performers at different ages, experience levels, and stages of development. Each pathway blends integrated training, in singing, acting, and dance, with meaningful performance opportunities.

Placement and progression are guided by readiness and growth, allowing for intentional overlap, and internal levels within pathways, as performers develop.

### Elevate Spotlight

A joyful and engaging performance pathway for **developing performers**, designed to build confidence, creativity, and a love of musical theatre. Spotlight includes multiple internal levels that allow performers to grow at their own pace while participating in age-appropriate productions and ensemble experiences.

### Elevate Encore

A dynamic and inspiring performance pathway for more **experienced performers** ready to dive deeper into their craft. Encore challenges students through ambitious material, ensemble-driven work, and expanded performance opportunities, while fostering leadership and artistic ownership.

### Elevate Studio

A **creative training pathway** for performers who want to build, strengthen, or refine their musical theatre skills in singing, acting, and movement. Studio offers classes from introductory through advanced levels and also serves as a natural pathway into Elevate's performance companies.



# ELEVATE SPOTLIGHT

## A Performance Company with Room to Grow

Ages 5-11, with leveled pathways based on age & experience

Elevate Spotlight is a performance company that blends **meaningful musical theatre training** with **fully realized performance opportunities**, serving ages 5-11 (with leveled pathways based on age & experience). Strong foundations are built in singing, acting, and movement while students learn how to rehearse, collaborate, and tell stories onstage, as part of a joyful, supportive theatre community.



### Rehearsal & Training

#### Tuesdays starting at 4pm

Weekly rehearsals include integrated training in singing, acting, and movement for musical theatre. Rehearsal work connects skill-building directly to Spotlight's various performance opportunities.

### Performance Opportunities

- Fall Showcase
- Spotlight Spring Musical
- Solo Series
- Recital
- Additional community performances

## 3 Spotlight pathways

Each performer is placed in a level designed to support their growth, confidence, and next steps based on both age + experience.

*\*Age overlap supports thoughtful, growth-based placement.*

### Broadway Babies (Ages 5-7)

A joyful, confidence-building introduction to musical theatre through singing, acting, and movement.

- Tuesdays, 4:00-5:30pm
- Play-based learning + foundational skills
- Supported participation in performances
- 1.5hr commitment



### Spotlight Jr (Ages 7-9)

Builds strong foundations while introducing more structure, focus, and independence in rehearsal.

- Tuesdays, 4:00-6:00pm
- Rehearsal + voice training
- Collaboration, confidence, and ensemble skills
- 2hr commitment



### Spotlight Company (Ages 9+)

A more focused company experience with increased training, responsibility, and featured performance opportunities.

- Tuesdays, 4:00-7:00pm
- Rehearsal + voice + jazz dance
- Greater responsibility, including featured roles
- 3hr commitment



### Company Placement Note

With the exception of Broadway Babies, Spotlight company placement is best for performers with some prior experience and readiness for a rehearsal-based environment. If a student is still building foundational skills, we may guide them toward Elevate Studio to help set them up for success.

# ELEVATE ENCORE

## A Performance Company with Space to Lead

Ages 11+ | Experience & Readiness-Based Placement

Elevate Encore is a performance company for **more experienced performers seeking deeper musical theatre training** alongside expanded performance opportunities. Encore blends **focused skill development** with **dynamic performance opportunities**, challenging performers to work with greater focus and intention, deepening their artistry and taking real ownership of the stories they tell onstage.

### Rehearsal & Training

**Tuesdays, 5:30–8:30pm**

Weekly rehearsals provide **three hours of integrated musical theatre training**, including **dedicated dance technique and voice training blocks**. Encore rehearsals operate with elevated expectations for focus, preparation, and collaboration, helping performers build the discipline and professionalism needed for high-level musical theatre work, while maintaining an encouraging, respectful and joy-filled environment.

- **One additional training class required**, with *Advanced Musical Theatre Lab* (Wed 7–8:30pm) strongly encouraged for deeper work in acting, vocal technique, audition preparation, and exploring industry pathways beyond the stage.

### Placement Note

Encore placement is guided by experience, readiness, and overall fit, rather than age or grade level alone. Some performers may transition into Encore earlier, while others benefit from continued growth within Spotlight before moving into this pathway.



### Performance Opportunities

Encore performers participate in a robust season of performance experiences, including:

- **Fall Showcase**
- **Encore Spring Musical**
- **Ongoing Solo Series**
- **Balance Dance Studios' Recital**
- **Additional community performances such as Trail of Lights & Company Info Day**



# ELEVATE STUDIO

## Training & Skill-Building Pathway | Ages 8+

Elevate Studio is a **training-focused pathway** of open-enrollment classes for students who want to **strengthen & refine their musical theatre skills** without the full rehearsal and performance commitment of a company track. Studio classes support developing performers, advanced students seeking deeper technique, company members seeking supplemental training, and those balancing other training commitments.

Elevate Studio also serves as an **intentional on-ramp** into company placement as readiness and experience grow.

### Studio Classes (Wednesdays)

Studio classes allow more time for creative exploration, acting work, and skill-building than is possible within rehearsal-based company tracks.

#### ● **Musical Theatre Lab 1**

**Ages 8+ | 5:00–6:00pm**

Foundational training in singing, acting, and movement for theatre, with an emphasis on confidence, focus, and “fun”damentals!

#### ● **Musical Theatre Lab 2**

**Ages 10+ | 6:00–7:00pm**

Technique-based training focused on confidence and artistry, through engaging acting, singing, and theatrical movement work, while preparing performers for more structured rehearsal environments.

#### ● **Advanced Musical Theatre Lab**

**Ages 11+ (approval required) | 7:00–8:30pm**

In-depth training in acting and vocal technique, audition preparation, and exploration of industry pathways beyond the stage, all with a focus on each individual’s evolution as an artist.

*\*Strongly encouraged for Encore members.*



### Performance Opportunities for Elevate Studio Students

- Participation in **at least one number** in the **Elevate Fall Showcase**
- **End-of-year Elevate Studio showcase**
- Possible invitation to participate in an **Elevate Spring Musical, as ensemble**

*\*Please note: Studio classes include a performance fee, similar to recital classes, supporting participation in Elevate performance opportunities.*

# SUMMER WITH ELEVATE

## Summer Training & Performance Opportunities

Summer at Elevate is an essential and exciting part of our program. Our summer offerings allow performers to deepen skills, build confidence, strengthen ensemble connections, and experience the heart of Elevate before the season begins.

**OnStage!**  
**A Musical Theatre Performance Lab**  
**June 22-25 | Ages 8-18**



OnStage! is a **high-energy, high-caliber, four-day musical theatre performance experience**, focused on learning, rehearsing and performing songs, scenes, and ensemble numbers, in a robust **SHOWCASE PERFORMANCE** at the end of the workshop.

With **integrated training in singing, acting, and dance** woven throughout the week, students gain confidence, stage presence, and experience working as part of a cast.

OnStage! is open to the public and structured in **age-based groups** to ensure developmentally appropriate coaching.

Onstage! offers a welcoming introduction to Elevate's musical theatre training style and community.

**ENROLL NOW!**

**Ages 8-10**

**Ages 11+**

**Elevate Summer Training Intensive**  
**August 10-13 | Ages 6-18**

**\*Required for Elevate Company Members**



The Elevate Summer Training Intensive is a **four-day, training-forward experience**, designed for Spotlight and Encore performers. This intensive emphasizes **process over performance**, allowing students to focus deeply on technique, collaboration, and artistic growth.

Training includes:

- Technique classes in voice, acting, and movement
- Audition skills and preparation
- Exploration of industry pathways beyond the stage
- Performer wellness, endurance, and healthy habits
- Collaborative studio and lab-style work

Select non-company students may be invited to participate with director approval.

**ENROLL NOW!**

**Ages 6-7**

**Ages 8-10**

**Ages 11+**

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# AUDITIONS & COMMITMENT

## A Year with Elevate

Elevate is designed as a **year-long experience** and commitment that balances training, rehearsal, and performance — including Elevate Rehearsal on Tuesdays, additional training classes (level dependent), and a required, truly impactful **summer intensive**.

From summer training through the spring musical, students are guided on a cohesive journey that builds skills, confidence, and ensemble connection over time.

## Auditions & Placement

Elevate uses an audition and placement process to ensure each performer is supported at the level where they are most likely to grow and thrive. Auditions allow us to consider experience, focus, readiness, and the ability to work within an ensemble—not simply raw talent.

**Based on the audition process, performers may be:**

- Placed in **Elevate Spotlight** or **Elevate Encore**
- Or recommended for **Elevate Studio** as a strong foundational training pathway

*\*Elevate Studio provides an exciting & supported pathway toward future company placement as readiness develops.*



## 2026–2027 Elevate Performing Arts Company AUDITIONS

### TUESDAY 5/19/26

Balance Dance Studios, STUDIO 7

Auditions are required for all students seeking placement in the Elevate Performing Arts Company, including returning members.

Auditions will include singing, acting, and dance. Detailed preparation requirements and materials will be shared with families after audition applications are submitted.

**Note:** All students are auditioning for placement within the 3 Elevate pathways. Auditions are organized by age for stamina and care — placement is guided by readiness, maturity, and how students work in the room.

### AUDITION SCHEDULE

**Ages 6-7: 4-6pm**

**Ages 8-10: 4-7pm**

**Ages 11+: 5-8pm**

Based on age as of September 15, 2026

## Secure your AUDITION spot now!!!

**APPLY NOW!**

**<--CLICK HERE**

Please submit the audition application as soon as possible to secure your spot. Applicants with conflicts on Tuesday, May 19, should still apply and indicate the conflict on the form; alternative audition options will be shared as available.

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# MEET OUR DIRECTORS



**Chantel Mead**  
**Elevate Artistic Director**

Chantel Mead is the Artistic Director of Elevate, providing steady leadership and guiding the program's creative vision. Now entering her fifth year with Elevate, Chantel brings both continuity and a deep understanding of how to support young performers, in a training-based, performance-driven environment—holding high expectations with care and building a culture where students feel seen, safe, and inspired to grow.

Chantel holds a BFA in Musical Theatre, a minor in Classical Voice, and graduate-level training in Vocal Pedagogy, with over 20 years of experience as a performer and educator. She remains committed to ongoing professional development and regularly pursues continued training in contemporary vocal science to ensure students are learning healthy, age-appropriate, and sustainable technique. After college, Chantel spent over a decade living, performing, and directing in Boulder, Colorado, before moving to New York City, where she served as a Music Teacher and Performing Arts Director. Her professional work and leadership in NYC continue to inform her approach to training young performers with both high standards and thoughtful care.

Now based in Austin, Chantel directs multiple youth theatre programs and vocal ensembles throughout the community and runs a private voice studio specializing in healthy technique, performance confidence, and audition preparation. She is also a homeschooling parent, and her daughter has grown up making Balance Dance Studios her dance home—deepening Chantel's personal connection to the studio community and the families it serves. At the heart of Chantel's work is a commitment to creating a brave, supportive environment where students are challenged artistically, supported personally, and encouraged to find their voice—onstage and beyond.



**Shawna Hesketh**  
**Spotlight Assistant Director & Choreographer**

Shawna Hesketh started dancing at an early age, at her one-room studio, in her small central Texas hometown. Her love of dance continued to grow, and she went on to join her high school's drill/dance team, and then began teaching dance at the age of 16. She attended Sam Houston State University, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree, in Photography and Dance.

While at SHSU, she was in several performances, including a graduate thesis, and also worked in the costume department for their Nutcracker production. After moving to Austin, she got back into dance full-time, diving into ballroom dancing.

Shawna then joined Balance Dance Studios, in the fall of 2012, in its inaugural year. Since then, she has created a home and family with Balance, is also the Director of Ignite Dance Company, and now gets to share this journey with her two children, as she watches them dance and grow.

**MORE...**



**Matt Kennedy**  
**Encore Assistant Director & Choreographer**

Matt Kennedy is an Actor, Choreographer, and Dancer working in Austin, Texas. Matt has trained in both Theatre Arts and Dance since his high school years. He began most of his rigorous training through an Austin company known as Impact Arts, he has continued to play parts in much of the work produced there, most recently directing and choreographing their production of “Disney’s The Little Mermaid” alongside esteemed Austin Actress Mariel Ardila. He has also choreographed their productions of “Bring It On”, “In The Heights”, and an original world premiere musical “Alice’s Wonderland” written and directed by J Quinton Johnson (Hamilton, Choir Boy, Everybody Wants Some).

Matt’s first love was the love of acting, and through the years, Matt has played many roles on stage including Snoopy (A Charlie Brown Christmas - Zach Theatre), Sheldon J Plankton (The SpongeBob Musical - Magnolia Musical Theatre), Mordcha (Fiddler On The Roof - Austin Opera), Evelyn Oakleigh (Anything Goes - TexArts), and Chef Louis (Disney’s The Little Mermaid - Zilker Hillside Theatre). During the years of 2020 through 2023, Matt commenced his East Coast journey, training under Impactful Dance Teachers/Choreographers/Directors that have influenced his choreography and artistic vision. He has trained under artists like Deshawn DaPrince, Kenichi Kasamatsu, Stephanie Klemons, Neil Schwartz, Carlos Neto, Miles Keeney, Bo Park, and Sam Javi. Throughout his theatre and dance career he has gotten to work with artists like Louis The Child, More Fatter, Chi Chi Gault, Vincent Jamal Hooper, J Quinton Johnson, Jesse J Sanchez, Sadie Dickerson, Stephen Skybell, and Kendrick Lamar

As an educator, Matt seeks to bring the light within people alive, and guides students into not only learning how to challenge themselves, but to embrace and be proud of the challenges they are facing. There is a story in each and every soul, and Matt’s artistic intent is to shine light upon each of those stories with their own unique and creative vision.



**Kyra Jackson**  
**Encore Choreographer**

Kyra Jackson is a dancer, choreographer, and performer born and raised in Austin, Texas. She joined Balance Dance Studios in 2025 and brings a dynamic blend of technical training, theatrical storytelling, and professional performance experience to her work.

Kyra has taught and choreographed for Impact Arts, Westwood High School, and the ZACH Pre-Professional Company, among others. Her performance credits include Sally in A Charlie Brown Christmas at ZACH Theatre, Jimmy 1 in Grand Hotel with The Alchemy Theatre, and Harper in Someone to Watch Over Me with Bandwagon Arts.

Deeply passionate about theatre and dance education, Kyra is committed to inspiring the next generation of young artists. She believes in creating meaningful, beautiful work grounded in passion, discipline, and pride in the process.

# WHY ELEVATE?



## Why Families Choose Elevate

Families choose Elevate because it balances **high-quality training** and **rich performance opportunities**, with a **deeply supportive and encouraging environment**.

Our programs emphasize strong foundations in singing, acting, and movement, while also cultivating confidence, collaboration, responsibility, and creative risk-taking. We hold high expectations for our performers and pair them with thoughtful guidance, clear communication, and a genuine commitment to each child's growth.

Parents often tell us that **Elevate becomes more than a program...** Elevate becomes a second home and **extended family** where their child is known, supported, and truly cared for, while being challenged to grow with both excellence *and* heart.



## A Safe & Supportive Environment in State of the Art Facilities

Elevate is housed inside of Balance Dance Studios and will perform in both the Bravo Black Box Studio and our brand new Luxora Theater, within the APAX Performing Arts Complex.

At Elevate, we believe in high expectations held with care, creating a positive, inclusive environment where young performers are supported, celebrated, and encouraged to grow together as artists and collaborators.



***We can't wait to meet your performer, learn their story,  
and welcome your family into our  
Elevate community!***

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