Silver Swans® ballet classes for the over-55s

Presented by

ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE

I joined the class for the love of dance, but also in recognition that my body needed toning and sustaining as I glide into older age. It's also in protest of getting old and a bid to seize the day.

– **Silver Swans participant**

Ballet is extremely rewarding and hard work … but the enjoyment, and the health benefits of flexibility, weight control, balance and mental stimulation cannot be beaten.

– **Silver Swans participant**

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Ballet has always been good for posture, fitness and helps with memory; add to this the beautiful music, a group of friendly ladies, fun, and Vanessa, our delightful teacher … I just wish I found a class like this 15 years ago.

– **Silver Swans participant**

I joined the class mainly for enjoyment and Silver Swans has far exceeded my expectations. It is such a pleasure to rediscover dance steps and movements that I learned more than 50 years ago.

– **Silver Swans participant**

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I do feel that there is a huge market for engaging the rising older population and this is a fantastic example of the kind of thing which will grow.

– **Silver Swans Licensee**

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Silver Swans

How does dancing make you feel?

Silver Swans has benefited me in so many ways in respect of my health and wellbeing as well as becoming something of a brief but regular social event with like-minded people.

– **Silver Swans participant**

I have made new friends and most of all we have had such fun. Quite often we end up in fits of giggles.

– **Silver Swans participant**

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I am very proud to teach this class. I can see the benefits and enjoyment my ladies get from it which is very rewarding. It also has given me a new focus that fits in well with my family life. I hope to teach it for many, many years.

– Silver Swans Licensee

I love [Silver Swans]. It's the highlight of my week. It's wonderful to watch the ladies grow in confidence and ability with huge smiles on their faces. I feel I'm making a huge difference to their lives not only physically but emotionally too.

– Silver Swans Licensee

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Born to Dance

People like to know that [Silver Swans] is under the banner of such a well-known institution as the Royal Academy of Dance and thus know that safe dance practice will be in force.

– **Silver Swans Licensee**

I have been interested in ballet all of my life. As I reached middle age I found adult ballet classes too demanding, so at over 70 years old this Silver Swans class is perfect.

– **Silver Swans participant**

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As well as having fun, I have been impressed by my teacher Vanessa's conscientious attention to detail and her thoroughness in teaching the correct technique. I am concerned about my memory as I get older and feel that the memorising of sequences is helpful.

– Silver Swans participant

I love the music and always feel that I will push myself more when there is music. The chance to express ourselves freely to the music is freeing and exhilarating while the chat over coffee afterwards with like-minded dancers is a very enjoyable part of my week.

– Silver Swans participant

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I have definitely felt the benefit of these [Silver Swans] classes and I thoroughly enjoy the company of ladies of a similar age. Miss Denise is a wonderful teacher and has such an obvious passion for her art. I would also add that when mentioning my ballet classes to my GP, she was very impressed!

– Silver Swans participant

Brenda and Kathy are both so knowledgeable not just about ballet/dance but also about human physiology and how important exercise is to keep the body in good condition.

– **Silver Swans participant**

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I decided to take up ballet after recovering from stage IV inoperable cancer. I never expected to survive … but when my life was restored I vowed that I would dance again. I didn't know how to begin but saw a piece on BBC about Silver Swans and managed to track down Angela (my teacher).

– Silver Swans participant

Since retiring I took up a childhood dream and joined wonderful Silver Swans classes. I find [them] excellent for mind, body and soul, keeps you supple, great for posture, co-ordination, balance and socially making lovely new friends. We have lots of fun and laughter … I love the class!

– Silver Swans participant

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Born to Dance

Growing up in a small village in the country I didn't have the opportunity to go to a dance class, so when I heard about this class I jumped at the chance. The ladies who attend the class are mainly over 50 ...
I love going, many of us go for coffee after so it is good socially also.

– **Silver Swans participant**

I always loved ballet but was not allowed to do it as a child as I broke my foot aged 5 copying ballet dancers in a book up on their pointes. However I now really enjoy Silver Swans … the physical and mental exercise and meeting new like-minded friends. At last I get to do what I always wanted.

– Silver Swans participant

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I had been interested in Silver Swans for some time ... I joined the class in January and absolutely love it. For me there is nothing like moving to music – I have certainly enjoyed this on a social basis throughout my life.

– **Silver Swans participant**

I love the classes – Becky is an excellent teacher and her example of graceful movement is something to which I aspire. I realise as I grow older the importance of good balance and posture and hope that I will be able to continue with the class for many years.

– Silver Swans participant

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Back to Dance

I've been hoping to find a local adult ballet class but have never done so until now. The longing to dance has never gone away so I leapt at the chance to try Silver Swans … It's fantastic that neither age nor ability rules you out and it's turned out to be the most perfect class for me.

– Silver Swans participant

You do classic barre exercises but they don't feel intimidating or over-exerting … you can work at your own humble level but dance as if you were a pro.

– **Silver Swans participant**

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Ballet is superb for core strengthening, grace and subtleness and once you start you immediately feel you're holding yourself in a better way and moving more freely and confidently.

– **Silver Swans participant**

Ballet music is particularly inspiring and it helps you release the beauty in movement. I've also found that it challenges my mind-body connection so I think my co-ordination will be improved. I really look forward to each class and never feel like I'm going off to exercise. It's a joy not a boot camp.

– Silver Swans participant

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I try to keep fit by attending Pilates or something similar, but inevitably I am looking at my watch after 20 minutes to see how much longer before I can go home and have a cup of tea. With Silver Swans classes, it is the opposite. I am disappointed when the hour is up and it is time to go home.

– Silver Swans participant

The benefits of the class are twofold: Firstly, the class has made me very aware of my deportment (as we age we tend to stoop). I leave the class feeling happier, lighter, more upright and supple. Secondly, there can be no doubt of the benefit of laughter – it certainly has the 'feel good' factor.

– Silver Swans participant

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I am fairly fit as I play quite a lot of sport, but I hope the ballet is improving my posture and suppleness. I joined the class mainly for enjoyment and Silver Swans has far exceeded my expectations. It is a pleasure to rediscover dance steps and movements that I learned more than 50 years ago.

– Silver Swans participant

The instructor Hannah is very considerate of differing ages and abilities. She has reinvigorated my childhood passion for ballet, giving me the opportunity to reaffirm my knowledge of technique and posture in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

– Silver Swans participant

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Each lesson gives me a real 'lift' and I feel it is very good exercise for both my body and mind. Judy is an excellent teacher and I really appreciate the carefully worked out programme, and the music. I feel fitter, brighter and happier.

– Silver Swans participant

I was a bit nervous because I had never had any ballet lessons, but my fears were unfounded. Yes, just about everybody else had done ballet as a child, but it didn't matter. I was made to feel very welcome and the other ladies hadn't danced for years so they were a tad nervous too.

– Silver Swans participant

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I will never be an older Darcey Bussell so I look on the classes as graceful exercise; I was surprised what muscles are used for the dance moves! It is also a lovely social event for ladies of a similar age who want to become 'Silver Swans'.

– Silver Swans participant

I was thrilled to find Silver Swans and although I obviously can't do things as I used to or would like to, the sheer joy of moving to music is still there – all the old steps and exercises – such fun. We are all in the same boat so it doesn't matter, we all do what we can.

– Silver Swans participant

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Ballet is such a wonderful discipline, mentally and physically. Remembering sequences, flexibility, balance and co-ordination all decline with age so the challenge can only be beneficial.

– **Silver Swans participant**

It has been fun and challenging learning some basic ballet positions and trying to move gracefully to music. Outside of the class, I think I am more aware of my posture and try not to slouch! We laugh a lot and enjoy ourselves in class and I always leave with a smile on my face.

– Silver Swans participant

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I am concerned about my memory as I get older and feel that the memorising of sequences is helpful. I love the music and always feel that I will push myself more when there is music. The chance to express ourselves freely to the music is freeing and exhilarating.

– **Silver Swans participant**

The longing to dance has never gone away so I leapt at the chance to try Silver Swans a month ago. It's fantastic that neither age or ability rules you out and it's turned out to be the most perfect class for me.

– **Silver Swans participant**

There is still a beauty of feeling and movement in people even when they are older; this is seldom recognised. The feeling of the movements with the particular pieces of music can really take you to another world; you can feel elegant and spiritual again. The classes raise me up – they are incredibly good for your soul.

– Silver Swans participant

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I couldn't believe it when the Silver Swan project started – my dream came true. We are all different shapes and sizes and varying ability, but it doesn't matter – our teacher is so encouraging. On Monday mornings I am transported to another world.

– Silver Swans participant

Silver Swans has unleashed the inner ballet dancer in so many of us. The class is a very pleasant group, a mix of those who have danced before and those who are new to ballet.

– **Silver Swans participant**

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The best part is when our exercises stop, the ballet dance commences, and we lose ourselves to the music and the moment, finding our inner ballerinas as swan-like, we glide across the floor.

Well, that's what we think we are doing!

– **Silver Swans participant**

I have loved living the dream that I had when I was a child, and being able to join in with everyone else.

– Silver Swans participant

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Photos: David Tett; Matt Round

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