

Gearing Up For BACK-TO-SCHOOL

Place your orders now for the best deals.

Back-to-school season is just around the corner, so start mapping out your fall assortment. Before you firm up your plans, check out our ordering guide. We've created a list of all the key deadlines and incentives you'll need to know, as you head into the biggest selling season of the year. To help ensure that your orders are on-trend, we've added a fall fabric forecast, an update on the tot market and a peek at the latest fashions in the ever-more-popular liturgical market.

Fabric Forecast

Close the sale with comfortable leotards.

BY HANNAH MARIA HAYES

This season, manufacturers are creating leotard lines for pre-professional dancers with synthetic fabrics or cotton/Lycra blends. Styles that fit well and flatter, class after class, are important to serious students. "Dancers getting back into classes will want something new, but in fabrics that feel great and will last the season," says Audrey Vratto, a senior designer at Danskin. "We think Tactel nylon/Lycra spandex and our sueded cotton/spandex will be important for back-to-school, because both are soft fabrics that offer comfort and good compression for the dancer."

Faith Rein, general manager of Grishko's retail division, expects that Meryl fabric will be especially popular with older students because of its moisture-absorbent, antibacterial qualities. "It's soft, washes well and keeps its shape and color," she says. "The fabric is the same that you would find in mainstream sportswear." Rein also says that leotard styles constructed mainly of Meryl-like fabrics but featuring accents in other same-color fabrics like velvet, stretch lace or brocade will be popular with serious ballet students because these dancers want unique attire that allows them to express their individuality without violating their studios' dress codes.

Though fabrics with wicking properties are crucial for serious teen and adult dancers who spend hours in the studio each day, simpler, traditional fabrics have a place with recreational and prepubescent dancers. To help meet the needs of these dancers, Só Dança recently released a new value line in matte jersey spandex. "It's proving to be very helpful for retailers because it is a very simple basic leo, but it does come in a few different colors, including black," says Kelly McCaughey, the company's office manager.

In terms of color, dancewear makers say that fabrics in classic uniform colors like black, navy and red will continue to be popular with dancers of all levels this season, but white and purple shades will



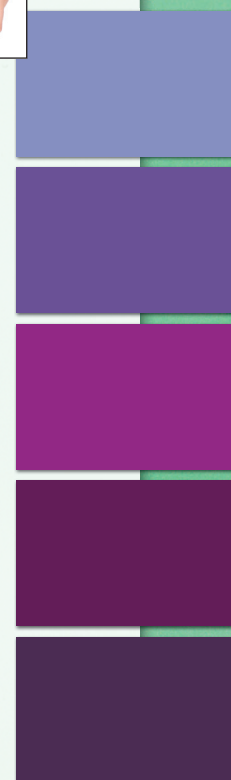
Danskin's tank (style 1792) and cap-sleeve (style 1790) leotards (above) are made from a Tactel nylon/Lycra spandex blend; Grishko's DA87 leotard (below) is made of Meryl with stretch-lace details.



attract dancers as well. Rein reports that white has become especially fashionable among students who are looking for attire that will help them stand out at auditions. McCaughey says that purple shades have also been consistently popular with Só Dança's customers, so the company is responding to consumer demand by offering five purple shaded fabrics this year.

Hannah Maria Hayes is a New York City-based writer with an MA in dance education from New York University.

This fall, Só Dança is offering five purple shaded fabrics. From top to bottom: lilac, purple, violet, dark purple and eggplant.



Trends For Tots



Sparkly, shiny, colorful attire will be a hit with tiny dancers this fall.

BY HALEY SHAPLEY

Thanks to TV shows like "Dance Moms" and "Toddlers & Tiaras," children's dancewear is in the spotlight like never before. "Many of the shows we see on TV now have a big effect on what retailers are buying for kids," says Shanice Knox, customer service lead at Sansha. "We've added products with shine and glitz."

Color is in vogue, too, with a move away from basic pinks and blacks into more vibrant territory. "Unless it's required by a studio, dancers in this category aren't all wearing ballet pink anymore," says Knox. "Individual moms are going for brighter colors accented with sparkle and bling."

At Capezio/Ballet Makers, Inc., colorful tutus are among the company's newest additions. "We have a rocker-inspired collection with multiple-colored tutu skirts featuring black and hot pink," says Allison Hart, Capezio's executive vice president of marketing and communications. The line comes in sizes for toddlers through children's large, and it offers separate tutus and one-piece leotards with attached tutus for younger dancers. Though the line was initially conceived for the older audience, the company decided it would suit younger dancers, too, because this group likes to emulate the older dancers they see at their studios. "The look is still young; it's just not prim," says Hart.

Today's unconventional, blingy styles meet a need created by another fairly recent trend: little girls who wear dancewear outside the studio. "We're seeing more little kids wearing tutus and tights as part of their normal street outfits," says Knox. Hart says retailers can capitalize on this trend by displaying a tutu with a jean jacket and leggings, and then pairing the same tutu with a matching leotard to show parents how versatile these items can be.

Though new colors and decorations are the leading trends in the tot market, in terms of cut, both Knox and Hart report that all-in-one styles remain extremely popular choices for the preschool set. "If moms buy separates, they still usually want them to match," says Knox. "Separates work especially well for girls with unusual body types."

Haley Shapley is a Seattle-based writer who specializes in retail topics.

This all-in-one (style 9891c) from Capezio's Little Diva Signature Collection (above) offers a conventional cut with shiny accents for a trendy twist; Sansha expects its bright Anuita all-in-one (right) will be popular this fall.



2012 Back-To-School ORDERING GUIDE:

A Wish Come True

DEADLINES: Place orders by June 25 for August 1 delivery.
DISCOUNT: Free shipping on orders over \$750. Offer expires December 31, 2012.

Body Wrappers/Angelo Luzio

DEADLINES: All in-stock orders will be shipped within 24 hours.
DISCOUNT: See your sales rep for details.

Capezio/Ballet Makers, Inc.

DEADLINES: Deadlines have not been announced.
DISCOUNT: The company's Deal of the Day promotions will continue through the back-to-school season, but contact your sales rep for details on other back-to-school promotions and specials.

Cliché Cosmetics

DEADLINES: Custom orders are shipped within two weeks. In-stock orders are shipped the next day.
DISCOUNT: Free shipping and 10 percent off your opening order.

Dancer Only

DEADLINES: All in-stock orders will be shipped within 24 hours.
DISCOUNT: All discounts will be e-mailed to customers.

Eurotard

DEADLINES: The company is currently offering a variety of programs and promotions with various deadlines. Check your e-mails frequently and contact your sales rep for more information.
DISCOUNT: The Eurotard Benefits program helps to connect stores with studios and dance groups. Contact your sales rep for more information.

Freed of London

DEADLINES: Place wholesale orders anytime, year-round. All orders ship within a day or two, unless a specific ship date is selected.
DISCOUNT: Incentives will be similar to last year's. Retailers will be notified through mailed statements.

Fuzi

DEADLINES: Place back-to-school orders by June 15.
DISCOUNT: Receive 5 percent off orders of \$1,000–\$1,999. Receive 10 percent off orders of \$2,000 or more.

Gaynor Minden

DEADLINES: Place fall orders by June 1 for delivery between July 23 and August 10.
DISCOUNT: 5 percent off, and no handling fees, on orders of \$1,000 or more. Additional fall discounts are available for orders over \$1,500.

Grishko

DEADLINES: Orders must be placed by May 11 to be shipped August 1–31.
DISCOUNT: Fall orders receive a discount with dating. Contact your rep for additional details.

Horizon Dance

DEADLINES: Place back-to-school orders by June 1 for delivery by September 1.
DISCOUNT: 5 percent off orders between \$200 and \$499. Free shipping on orders of \$500 or more.