



TRINITY **IRISH DANCE** **ENSEMBLE**

2026



ENSEMBLE 101 - YOU'VE GOT QUESTIONS, WE'VE GOT ANSWERS!

WHAT IS THE ENSEMBLE PROGRAM?

The Ensemble program is a place for Trinity's most seasoned and passionate performers to dive deeper into the performing arts, experience unique performance opportunities around the world and act as leaders and role models for Trinity's younger dancers.

The essence of the Ensemble program was born in the early 90's when Mark Howard took a group of his senior Trinity Academy dancers and the band *The Drovers* to a CIOFF festival in Schoten, Belgium. Right out of the gate, Howard's unique style of choreography combined with the skills of the dancers led to invitations to festivals around the world. These early journeys helped shape what would ultimately become Howard's professional Trinity Irish Dance Company, and laid a strong foundation for the ever evolving Ensemble program.

WHEN IS THE ENSEMBLE AUDITION AND WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO AUDITION?

Date: Saturday, January 10th

Location: Elm Grove Studios

Time: 10:00-12:30pm (NEW Dancers); 1:00-3:30pm (RETURNING Dancers)

1. Dancers must be born in 2012 (U14 as of January 1, 2026) or older AND be enrolled in the Waterford/Wexford/Wicklow class OR the Province Program.
2. Dancers must be enrolled and participate in TPT as a Trinity Gold dancer for the upcoming performance season.

All dancers must participate in the yearly audition process. However, **no dancer is cut from the Ensemble program!** The Ensemble Audition is an evaluation opportunity before each dancer is cast for the various performance opportunities each season. We cast each dancer according to where we know they will be set up for success, while still up for a challenge. Based on their current state of training, mixed with individual strengths and talents so each dancer's individuality still meshes with the cast to create the best performance and experience possible for each dancer.

WHAT WILL MY DANCER DO AT ENSEMBLE?

In the Ensemble program, dancers will learn new performance repertoire and have the opportunity to be casted for a variety of performance opportunities. From local high end shows to band shows to international music and dance festivals, Ensemble dancers will grow as performing artists, make new friends and create what will become some of their favorite Trinity memories.

WHAT ARE THE ENSEMBLE LEVELS?

Ensemble encompasses four levels. The four levels are based on the number of years your dancer has been in the Ensemble program and dancers will move up in year placements every season, alongside the other dancers that joined the same year as you (similar to how students move up to the next grade in school every year).

Your Ensemble Level determines which performance opportunities you are eligible for and what requirements/responsibilities we expect each dancer to uphold. More information on each Ensemble level can be found below.

[YEAR 1](#) | [YEAR 2](#) | [YEAR 3](#) | [YEAR 4 & UP](#)

HOW ARE DANCERS CASTED FOR PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES?

Ensemble cast assignments are not an easy decision and we spend a lot of time putting them together every season. We cast each dancer according to where we know they will be set up for success, while still up for a challenge. Based on their current state of training, mixed with individual strengths and talents so each dancer's individuality still meshes with the cast to create the best performance and experience possible for each dancer.

Ensemble cast assignments are a team decision and are not made by one person.

Ensemble casts are made by the entire Ensemble Teaching Team, the entire Trinity Program Leads Team and by Trinity Management.

- Your Ensemble Level does not automatically get a dancer placed on a certain cast. Cast Assignments are reassessed and reassigned each year based on a variety of factors.
- Competitive achievements will NOT determine your cast assignment in this program.
- Your personal commitment, technical improvement, serious knowledge and mastery of repertoire, Ensemble characteristics and team spirit will play a large role in your cast assignment.
- Dancers are cast according to experience (including direct feedback from dancers trip teachers from the previous year), applied knowledge and mastery of material, as well as by the attributes we expect our Ensemble dancers to showcase.
- Dancers are also cast based on their audition. We look for dancers who have prepared the audition material with little to no mistakes and who put 100% effort into the audition.
- Additionally, characteristics such as ability to emotionally adjust/pivot quickly to both environmental changes or potential spot shifts in performances are taken into consideration.

- Outside of a dancer's technical Irish dance skills, Ensemble experience and characteristics, we must also consider festival guidelines and limitations to the number of participants, type/lengths of performances and more. Trinity does not set the number of dancers we are able to bring on each performance that involves traveling out of state/on a festival.
- If a dancer is placed on a trip that involves travel, that dancer must be able to show respect towards festival volunteers/staff, other countries/cultures they are not familiar with and be trusted to follow the Ensemble rules in place to ensure

HOW DOES ENSEMBLE SECURE PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES?

Securing festival opportunities is not as easy as you might think! The majority of festivals do not reply directly to our outreach and securing a festival is largely dependent on word of mouth from the previous year's festival's director. Communication is very sporadic with international festivals from the initial contact to the trip and most festivals do not secure their groups until the spring for a July festival.

Trinity's standards for accepting a festival: Trinity has certain criteria we look for when choosing an international festival to ensure it meets the program's needs and sets the group up for a successful and fun experience. However, this does limit the number of festivals we are able to participate in as we have certain criteria that we follow.

- 1) **Performance Groups are housed together and not separated into host families** - We will only accept festivals where dancers are housed together but we do not control anything else related to housing (how many dancers per room, air conditioning, etc.)
- 2) **Festival Time Frame** - We will only accept festivals 7-14 days + travel days and take place during the month of July. We are only able to accept festivals in July due to the larger Trinity schedule and dancers' school schedules.
- 3) **CIOFF Festival** - CIOFF (International Council of Folklore Festivals) has a set of festival requirements that ensure certain safety standards & do not cost money for participation outside of flights. Many international festivals in other organizations are "pay to play" and would drastically increase the cost per dancer.

HOW ARE ENSEMBLE TRIPS PAID FOR?

Performance trips are paid as a separate fee for each cast that covers travel expenses, excursion costs, trip supplies, teachers and musicians to accompany the dancers, etc. It is our goal that everyone has a clear understanding as to the typical costs of these trips. The estimated cost of an International trip ranges from \$2,500-\$3,500, a North American trip ranges from \$1,500-\$2,500 and Local trips range from \$100-\$300.

To help offset the costs of these trip costs, Ensemble has a variety of fundraising opportunities throughout the year. Fundraising is a TEAM EFFORT and run by the Ensemble families with support from the The Trinity Booster Club and Academy. The Ensemble program is a multi-year journey, and while your dancer may not be traveling internationally this year, there will be future opportunities to travel and benefit from the fundraising foundation we have established in Ensemble! We are grateful when Ensemble families have stepped up to spearhead or co-host fundraising events knowing that it will come full circle when it's their dancer's chance to travel.

In years past we have raised enough for dancers to receive \$500-800 back from travel fees and we cannot do this without the help of each Ensemble dancer and Ensemble family. It is our expectation that every dancer and family comes together as a community to support the trips. We will need to have 100% participation from all Ensemble families to make these efforts a success.

Example Fundraising Opportunities: If you have any ideas for new fundraising opportunities or would like to play a larger role on the fundraising committee, please let us know!

1. Pre-Feis Workshops - Pat Roche, Winter Feis, Spring Feis
2. Pancake Dinner
3. Used Trinity Wear Sale
4. Cubs and Brewers Games
5. Virtual Raffles
6. Popcorn and Coffee Sales
7. Ensemble Hooley

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE ENSEMBLE SEASON?

Expect lots of fun and also lots of hard work! Trinity has built a legacy of excellence and led the way in performances over the past 40 years...we know how to do this! There is no other Irish dance school that has a performance program like Ensemble. Throughout your Ensemble journey, you can expect to learn new skills and improve old ones, develop leadership skills, build lasting friendships, gain confidence and independence, and experience the thrill of working together towards a common goal.

Expect to build community. From carpools to overnight sleepovers to performance trips in the U.S. and around the world, meaningful friendships find their foundation in the Ensemble experience. Each performance Cast is made up of dancers from different locations, states and levels and you can expect to meet and perform with new people you haven't had the chance to dance with yet.

Expect to learn about different cultures and communities. The Ensemble program and the unique performance opportunities it provides are often the highlight of a Trinity dancer's career. These opportunities will expose dancers to different cultures and communities, both within the U.S. and internationally. You can expect to push yourself outside of your comfort zone as you interact with dancers and musicians who may not

speak the same language but can relate and connect with you through the common language of dance.

Expect schedules to change (but not too much!). As you can imagine, scheduling practice with dancers across two states over the course of 7 months is a huge task and sometimes circumstances warrant that details shift and change. Additionally, securing performance opportunities with outside organizations (and countries!) is not as easy as you might think and could affect the practice schedule. We will do our best to always keep you up to date on any changes to the schedule or details you need through the Ensemble Newsletter that is sent directly to dancers and parents via email. It is vitally important that both dancers and parents read every Ensemble Newsletter and be able to keep a calendar.



ENSEMBLE YEAR 1

Year 1 Ensemble Dancers are at the beginning of their Ensemble journey and are learning and mastering the core material as they gain performance experience. All dancers, regardless of when they join and eligibility, will start their Ensemble journey in Year 1.



WHAT'S EXPECTED OF YEAR 1 ENSEMBLE DANCERS?

In addition to developing their Ensemble repertoire knowledge and skills, these dancers must show consistent attendance and commitment to the program, a positive and hardworking attitude and embody the Trinity and Ensemble inside AND outside of practice. Year 1 Ensemble dancers also need to start building a comfortability in communicating directly with Ensemble teachers and staff and participate in Ensemble fundraising opportunities throughout the year.

WHAT PERFORMANCES ARE YEAR 1 DANCERS ELIGIBLE TO BE CAST IN?



ALL Year 1 dancers are eligible to be cast in the following performance opportunities, however, casting in the below opportunities is not guaranteed.

Local Irish Fests (Madison, IAHC, Naperville)
Iowa Irish Fest
Milwaukee Irish Fest
Sundays on State
La Fete de Marquette
Local Performance Opportunities
Arts in the Dark Halloween Parade

[WHAT TO PREPARE FOR THE AUDITION](#) | [REHEARSAL SCHEDULE](#) | [HOW TO REGISTER](#)

ENSEMBLE YEAR 2

Year 2 Ensemble Dancers have shown incredible progress in their technical skill set and knowledge of material, and are growing as leaders and performers. These dancers have completed one year in Ensemble, have gained a solid understanding of the core Ensemble numbers and are starting to learn the rest of the Ensemble material.

WHAT'S EXPECTED OF YEAR 2 ENSEMBLE DANCERS?

In addition to the Ensemble core repertoire knowledge and skills, Year 2 dancers are committed to the program, have consistent attendance, are prepared for rehearsals and have a positive team spirit throughout the season. These dancers embody Trinity and Ensemble's spirit inside AND outside of practice and are starting to develop and illustrate leadership qualities. They attend Trinity functions, participate in Ensemble fundraising and communicate directly with the Ensemble instructors and staff.



WHAT PERFORMANCES ARE YEAR 2 DANCERS ELIGIBLE TO BE CAST IN?

ALL Year 2 dancers are eligible to be cast in the following performance opportunities, however, casting in the below opportunities is not guaranteed.



- Iowa Irish Fest
- Local Irish Fests (Madison, IAHC, Naperville)
- Sundays on State/La Fete de Marquette
- North American Performance Trips
- Local High-End Performances
- Milwaukee Irish Fest (Year 2 are required to participate)
- Arts in the Dark Halloween Parade

[WHAT TO PREPARE FOR THE AUDITION](#) | [REHEARSAL SCHEDULE](#) | [HOW TO REGISTER](#)

ENSEMBLE YEAR 3

Year 3 Ensemble Dancers have shown a significant commitment to performance through a combination of applied knowledge, skill set, mastery of material and experience. These dancers have completed two years of Ensemble experience and are now eligible for international casting.

WHAT'S EXPECTED OF YEAR 3 ENSEMBLE DANCERS?

In addition to the Ensemble repertoire knowledge and skills, Year 3 dancers should be able to teach any of the Ensemble numbers to new Ensemble dancers. Year 3 dancers are committed to the program, have consistent attendance, are prepared for rehearsals and illustrate leadership qualities such as positive attitude, volunteerism, approachability, a willingness to help others and more. These dancers embody Trinity and Ensemble's spirit inside AND outside of practice. They attend Trinity functions, participate in Ensemble fundraising and consistently communicate directly with the Ensemble instructors and staff.



WHAT PERFORMANCES ARE YEAR 3 DANCERS ELIGIBLE TO BE CAST IN?



ALL Year 3 dancers are eligible to be cast in the following performance opportunities, however, casting in the below opportunities is not guaranteed.

- International Festivals
- Iowa Irish Fest
- Local Irish Fests (Madison, IAHC, Naperville)
- Sundays on State/La Fete de Marquette
- Local High-End Performances
- North American Performances Trips
- Milwaukee Irish Fest (Year 3 are required to participate)
- Band Performances
- TV Shows
- Arts in the Dark Halloween Parade

[WHAT TO PREPARE FOR THE AUDITION](#) | [REHEARSAL SCHEDULE](#) | [HOW TO REGISTER](#)

ENSEMBLE YEAR 4 & UP

Year 4 & Up Ensemble dancers understand the Trinity mission on the deepest level. These dancers have completed three full years of Ensemble and are eligible to be cast on all performance opportunities and may be cast for multiple performances for the season.

WHAT'S EXPECTED OF YEAR 4 & UP ENSEMBLE DANCERS?

Year 4 & Up dancers are committed to the program, have consistent attendance, are prepared and can teach ALL Ensemble dancers to others within the program. They illustrate leadership qualities such as positive attitude, volunteerism, approachability, a willingness to help others and more. These dancers often showcase these leadership skills as Rehearsal Directors, leading their peers with grace and confidence.

These dancers embody Trinity and Ensemble's spirit inside AND outside of practice. Year 4 & Up dancers are well-rounded performers and are role models within the school. They attend Trinity functions, participate in Ensemble fundraising and consistently communicate directly with the Ensemble instructors and staff.

WHAT PERFORMANCES ARE YEAR 4 & UP DANCERS ELIGIBLE TO BE CAST IN?



ALL Year 4 & Up dancers are eligible to be cast in the following performance opportunities, however, casting in the below opportunities is not guaranteed.

- International Festivals
- Iowa Irish Fest
- Local Irish Fests (Naperville, IAHC, Madison)
- Sundays on State/La Fete de Marquette
- Local High-End Performances
- North American Performance Trips
- Milwaukee Irish Fest (required for Year 4 & Up)
- Corporate Shows
- Band Performances and TV Shows
- Arts in the Dark Halloween Parade



[WHAT TO PREPARE FOR THE AUDITION](#) | [REHEARSAL SCHEDULE](#) | [HOW TO REGISTER](#)

WHAT TO PREPARE FOR THE AUDITION

DANCER ENSEMBLE EMAILS: As the young adults and leaders in the school, we ask that dancers communicate directly with us to encourage ownership and responsibility over their dance careers. It is required for all Ensemble dancers to create an Ensemble email (firstname.lastinitial.ensemble@gmail.com). This will ensure all communication is sent to one place and hold dancers responsible for consistently checking and responding to Ensemble emails. Please note, parents will be cc'd on all communication for oversight.

- **Ensemble Newsletter:** To help streamline communication, we send out an Ensemble Program Newsletter via email that includes everything you need to know about what's happening in the Ensemble program including links to rehearsal schedules, notes/homework from the previous rehearsals, announcements and more.

AUDITION FORM: All dancers are required to fill out the [Ensemble Audition Form](#) in advance of the audition.

- **Dancers need to fill out the Audition Form by January 6th.**

ENSEMBLE CODE OF CONDUCT: Ensemble dancers are the leaders and role models of Trinity and we expect Ensemble dancers to represent themselves and Trinity in a positive light on and off the dance floor, at all Trinity events and while at performances (TPT and Ensemble).

- Ensemble dancers are required to sign a [Code of Conduct Form](#) at the beginning of the season. We want you to be proud of the image you are portraying as an Ensemble dancer throughout the entire season, not just during the summer. Liability, medical and passport information will be filled out as separate documents prior to departure if casted on a trip that involves travel.
- **Dancers need to print out the Code of Conduct Form and bring a physical copy to the audition on January 10th.**

LEARN THE AUDITION MATERIAL: Material dancers are expected to learn and prepare for the audition will be sent out the week of the first Audition Prep class on December 20th and will also be posted to the Trinity Parent Site.

ENSEMBLE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE 2026

A master schedule with all of these dates in one place [can be found here](#).

AUDITION PREP (OPTIONAL)

These classes are optional! During these practices, each dancer will learn and perfect the material they will need to prepare for the Ensemble audition. Dancers who do not attend the Audition Prep will need to learn and prepare the material via videos (will be sent after the first prep class) for the audition.

ENSEMBLE TRAINING CLASS

Similar to a dancer's Oireachtas Training Class, the Ensemble Training Class allows dancers to work on their Ensemble material in their home studio on a more consistent basis. This is where dancers will learn the bulk of their Ensemble material and focus on the breakdown of their steps. With an emphasis on technique, these classes will provide a perfect complement to your solo training!

****Note for dancers who are cast on a Worlds Team - your Ensemble Training Class on overlapping practice dates will take place at Oak Grove from 10-11am before your Worlds Team practice to help balance both schedules and cut down on driving time.****

CASTED REHEARSALS

During these practices, dancers will practice with their cast to learn how to put an Ensemble show together. These practices are focused on formations, how you move around the floor and interact with the other dancers, transitions, performance quality and more.

- **Attendance Policy:** No more than two absences can be accepted for Casted Rehearsals. More than two may result in a dancer being taken out of numbers. Conflicts are to be communicated directly with MacKenzie Holland.

AUDITION PREP	ENSEMBLE TRAINING CLASS	CASTED REHEARSALS
December: 20, 31(*Madison only) January: 3 (No Madison), 9	January: 18, 25 February: 1, 8, 15 March: 1, 22 April: 12	January: 24 (Dance Chicago Dancers ONLY) April: 18, 25 May: 2, 16 June: 6, 18, 19, 20 July: 11, 16, 17, 18
<p>CLASS TIMES SATURDAY 9:00-10:30am: NEW and Year 1 10:30-12:00pm: Year 2, 3, 4 & Up</p> <p>CLASS TIMES FRIDAY 6:30-8:00pm: NEW and Year 1 8:00-9:30pm: Year 2, 3, 4 & Up</p> <p>MADISON TIMES 12/20 & 12/31 12:00-1:30pm: NEW and Year 1 1:30-3:00pm: Year 2, 3, 4 & Up</p>	<p>FEBRUARY 1st CLASS TIMES 10:00-2:00pm: All Years at Elm Grove</p> <p>JANUARY-APRIL CLASS TIMES ELMHURST 9:00-11:30am: Year 1 and Year 2 11:00-1:30pm - Year 3 and 4 & Up</p> <p>JANUARY-APRIL MADISON OR ELM GROVE CLASS TIMES 9:00-11:30am: All Years</p>	<p>JANUARY 24th: 2:00-5:30pm</p> <p>CLASS TIMES 10:00-3:00pm</p> <p><i>*4/18 and 4/25 are 12:30-5:00pm at Oak Grove*</i></p> <p>ELMHURST AND ELM GROVE Locations will be assigned when the casts are announced in January.</p>

REGISTRATION CLOSES ON JANUARY 7TH!

COST/BILLING

Dancers should register for the Ensemble Audition and Ensemble Program as either a returning or new dancer. The Audition Prep Classes are optional and will be charged as a drop in fee for each class you attend.

The Ensemble Audition cost for new dancers includes the \$25 standard audition fee plus \$60 for your Ensemble welcome bag that includes a drawstring bag, Ensemble shirt, drumsticks, scuba, Ensemble headpiece and a sticker.

Families with more than one dancer in the program will be offered a 50% discount on the second dancer's tuition for Ensemble.

Note, all Audition Prep drop in fees will be billed in January or February based on drop in class date.

2026 Ensemble Audition Prep	\$10 drop in fee
2026 Ensemble Audition - Returning Dancers	\$25 flat fee
2026 Ensemble Program - Returning Dancers	\$142 a month JAN-JULY
2026 Ensemble Audition - New Dancers	\$85 flat fee
2026 Ensemble Program - New Dancers	\$142 a month JAN-JULY

HOW TO REGISTER:

1. Click on the link below to be taken directly to the Parent Portal enrollment page for that specific class.
2. Attendance will be taken during drop in classes, and dancers will be registered after each drop in and then billed for the Audition Prep class they attend.

2026 ENSEMBLE REGISTRATION LINKS
2026 Ensemble Audition - Returning Dancers
2026 Ensemble Audition - New Dancers
2026 Ensemble Program - Returning Dancers
2026 Ensemble Program - New Dancers