

The sport and art of dance



Many people play sports in their spare time. Some examples include football, basketball, and golf. But the surprisingly difficult sport of dance is commonly overlooked. Shanna LaFleur once said, “ It takes an athlete to dance, but an artist to be a dancer. ” Dance expresses strong feelings and emotions through graceful or sharp, powerful movement, revealing to the audience every bit of passion behind it. Countless forms of dance exist in the world. Jazz, ballet, and tap are the most common. When a person thinks of dance, they think of pink tights and tutus.

Dance consists of so much more than that. Jazz, one of the most popular forms of dancing, usually consists of a more upbeat and fast tempo movement. The different types of jazz include: classic/stylized, lyrical, and street-funk. The classic/stylized form consists of regular clear lines (definite shapes of the body) and sharp (fast and precise) movements. These movements require quickness but also the ability to make them flow. Jazz works closely with musical theater. This is the kind you would see in a Broadway show like Chicago, a Las Vegas show, or in a TV show like “ Fame”.

Ballet represents the basis for all great dancers, because of its complex and difficult structure of movement. A recent study by medical researchers, of over sixty different athletic activities, ranked ballet second to only football in terms of physical, mental and environmental demands. This classical dance form demands grace and precision. The movement of ballet originates from turnout from the hip, the five positions of the feet, pointe (dance on top of toes), extensions (lines made by extending legs out), elevation (balance and height of jumps), and beats (fast actions of bringing legs together).

Many describe it as elegant and refined. Hip hop relies completely on a person's rhythm and musicality. It allows the audience to see the music. Hip-hop includes various moves such as breaking, popping, locking and krumping. In order to be great at it, a dancer must have full body control and endurance. People who are willing to train long and hard can become great at it, but for many hip hop dancers, the talent comes natural. Another dance form, known as contemporary, steals the hearts of most dancers and audience members.

Most contemporary dances tell a story or convey a message. This style became known for combining different types of dance to form choreography that people could emotionally connect to. Lyrical, very similar to contemporary, embodies a more ballet look and feel. The slower motions and fluidity creates longer lines and to expresses stronger emotions. The movement, strongly based on the lyrics of the song, expresses a similar if not the same idea. Many people exclude dance in their mind when thinking about sports.

The physical demands placed on the bodies of dancers prove to make them just as vulnerable as football players to injury. Just like any other physical activity, dance comes with a risk of injury. Injuries devastate many dancers' careers. Luckily, reducing or avoiding them is a possibility. The practice of movements repeatedly that require extreme flexibility, strength, and endurance make them more likely to develop overuse injuries. Beginner dancers must take their time building their strength and flexibility slowly and carefully.

Taking the time to properly warm up the major muscles of the body prevents dance injuries the most. John Wooden once said, “ Don’t let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do. ” Dancing requires a great amount of muscle and flexibility and during the dancers’ recovery period they lose most of both. This quote relates to dancers injuring themselves, because they basically have to start all over again after recovery. Numerous dance injuries exist, two examples are provided.

A muscle tear occurs when the fibers of a muscle in the body become overstretched. This type of injury usually occurs in a physical sport, like dance. The dancer will feel high levels of pain and eventually a decrease in the function of the injured muscular group. Normally the muscle tear makes popping noises. Icing the injured area decreases the swelling. Torn muscles require physical therapy in order to fully heal. Stress fractures can occur in almost any bone in the body. Dancers’ stress fractures occur mostly in the foot and ankles.

A stress fracture starts as a minor fracture or crack inside of the bone. If the pounding pressure continues to be put on the fracture, it could result in a complete fracture. Most stress fractures recover quickly without casts or surgery especially if detected early Dancers do not expect success, they train and work for it. Camilla Jessel said, " The trained dancer must not only have grace and elegance, but also the leap of an Olympic hurdler, the balance of a tight-rope walker and panther-like strength and agility. Dance is emotion, intuition; dance is grace, beauty, mixed with the unpredictability of the human body. All people feel and all people move. It is a natural part of human expression. These simple movements embody people’s development,

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both physically and mentally, as a whole, and an individual. Dance shares personal experiences with others. Great dancers are not great because of their technique; they are great because of their passion. So remember, dance like no one is watching.