

The Athleticism of Dance

Ballethnic Dance Company Lecture Demonstration Study Guide



The new lecture demonstration program, ‘The Athleticism of Dance,’ introduces the audience to similarities between popular athletic sports and dance. We begin by showing the importance of **warm-up**, stretching, and injury prevention in any physical activity. We then discuss and demonstrate **body control**, including the scientific concepts inertia and momentum. Also, dancers and athletes both build and maintain **strength**. Dancers show a variety of impressive partnered lifts to illustrate this. Finally, we demonstrate **coordination and footwork**, including mental coordination, as ballet was created from the sport of fencing centuries ago. These topics culminate in an exciting finale of dance. This program incorporates humor, narration, and several varieties of dance to engage the audience. At the end of the 45-minute program, students and teachers are encouraged to ask questions of the dancers.

STRETCHING/INJURY PREVENTION

:

- An injured athlete or dancer cannot perform his/hr best, or not at all!
- This is why dance is important for the athlete.
- In dance, stretching is vital. Dancers are constantly stretching to improve and maintain their flexibility, and also to prevent injury.
- Injuries occur due to lack of strength, mobility (capability of moving or being moved, or changing quickly from one condition to another), dexterity (skill in the use of hands or body), or flexibility (capability of being pliable and being responsive to change).
- Also, improper preparation or accidents can occur.
- Dancers and athletes should stretch lightly before activity to “loosen up,” moderately during and after to improve flexibility.

- Remember, the definition of stretching is to extend without breaking or tearing.
- Think of a rubber band kept in the freezer versus a rubber band at room temperature. Which will stretch further?

BODY CONTROL

- With the emphasis ballet places on developing extraordinary balance, athletes such as basketball players would commit fewer fouls and be less prone to committing turnovers.
- Which other sports could benefit from dance training?
- Introduce concept of spotting while turning and jumping. One non-athletic example is how a cat can land on its feet, and control its body in an efficient manner.
- **Science of Dance**
 - Limbs away from the body → turn slower
 - Limbs close to body → turn faster
 - Examples

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- Show pirouettes a la seconde, passe, coupe. (Which is fast/slow?)
- Inertia (also known as momentum)
An object in motion stays in motion, an object in rest stays in rest
- Centripetal force
A spinning object goes to the outside of a circle
- Examples
 - Merry-go-round (hold on tight or fall off!)
 - Turn fast with arms extended (feel how the blood goes to your hands)

STRENGTH

Narrator:

- Ballet increases the core strength of an athlete by developing the smaller muscle groups which go unnoticed and underused by most other athletes.
- For instance, elevés or relevés, if properly executed, will allow the dancer to go sur le pointe (on the toes). It also helps increase jump and softens landings.
- Dancers can even develop the strength to jump from metatarsals.
- Core strength is what allows dancers to extend his or her leg high into the air, or en l'air, and maintain their balance.
- Dancers can even take the leg to other position while maintaining correct placement due to this core strength.
- Of course, strength is also needed by both partners for lifting.
- **Science of Dance**
 - To lift and be lifted, you must share your weight
(Introduce term “spine” or “backbone”)
 - Put your spine over/under each other’s spine
(Introduce term “center of gravity” – between belly button and hips)
 - Examples
 - Try partnered tour jete holding hand-to-hand, hand-to-elbow, and hand-to shoulder
 - Which is easier?
 - Which allows you to jump higher?

-Dancers can even take the leg to other position while maintaining correct placement due to this core strength.

-Notice how intricate timing and awareness are developed through lifting.

How can this be beneficial in sports?

COORDINATION AND FOOTWORK

Narrator:

- Proper coordination and footwork is required on both offense and defense. It is essential to staying in front of your opponent on defense

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and getting past your opponent on offence. Specific, clear, and articulate movements are required.

- Name a sport which requires good footwork.
- Ballet comes from a specific sport, do you know what that is? (Fencing)
- In sports and dance, it is necessary to have a clear and concise understanding of where you need to be at a specific time to achieve maximum productivity. (ex – coordinating rotations and spacing for plays, faking)
- When and how would you use these concepts in sports?
- Another example of footwork is chasse, a chasing step. Which sports use this step?

-The dancers showed a variety of lifts – supported, sustained, pressed, punched, tossed, snatched.

-Dancers can even take the leg to other position while maintaining correct placement due to this core strength.

-Notice how intricate timing and awareness are developed through lifting.

How can this be beneficial in sports?

- Introduce movements of dance and types of jumps.
- **Science of Dance**
 - “For every action, there is an equal, opposite reaction”
In other words,
“What goes up must come down” and vice versa
 - Examples
 - You must plie before you jump
(Try jumping from straight legs)
 - You must plie when you land from a jump
(Or else you will hurt yourself)
 - Partnered lifts
(Pushing down while lifting up)
 - Think of a bouncing ball

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