

Falling for Dance - Dance Teacher

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November 30, 2001

Dance News

Michelle Vellucci

Nov. 29, 2001 07:00PM EST

Falling for Dance

Attending New York City Center's Fall for Dance performance last weekend was a lot like going to a baseball game. And even though I'm not a big sports fan, I mean that in a good way.

For those who don't live in the city or are unfamiliar with the program, here's a little background: Fall for Dance started in 2004, spearheaded by City Center President Arlene Shuler, along with Elise Bernhardt and Ellen Dennis, with the idea of boosting dance audiences by serving up variety-packed performances at a bargain-basement price. With 10 days of programming and about 30 dance companies on the bill, audiences get to see a selection of four or five different troupes at any given show—for \$10. Nowadays, you can't even see a movie for that price.

This year, as in those past, all the performances sold out. So coveted was a spot in the 2,750-seat theater that people lined up early at the box office in hopes of snatching returned or unclaimed tickets; they pleaded for them in postings on Craigslist.

But let's get back to baseball. Perhaps sitting way up in the vertiginous gallery overlooking the stage contributed to the stadium-like sensation. But there was something else: The crowd was boisterous—the ladies in front of me even pulled snacks out of their purses to share. People of all ages and backgrounds filled the seats. The energy crackled. It felt casual—and fun. I almost expected someone in the crowd to produce a beach ball.

During the performances, the audience was rapt. And no matter how subtle, challenging or downright weird a piece was, it was met with genuinely enthusiastic applause and cheers. By the time the final company—Via Katlehong, a roof-raising troupe from South Africa—took the stage, the audience was hooting, clapping and dancing in their seats.

We hear a lot of talk about dance being the least appreciated and understood of all the arts. The myth is that the average person “doesn't get it,” and shuns dance because of its opaque meaning and lack of an obvious narrative (in many cases). But the response to Fall for Dance tells a different story. One could make the argument that the New York City demographic differs from that of other areas, that it is more “sophisticated” when it comes to appreciation for the arts. But I think that dance, the most visceral of all the arts, has the power to draw in just about anyone—if only they're given the opportunity.

Excitingly, the Orange County Performing Arts Center in Costa Mesa, California, picked up on the idea and is premiering its very own Fall for Dance this month (October 11–14). OCPAC is offering two programs, each with five companies, among them Boston Ballet, Martha

Graham Dance Company and Rennie Harris Puremovement. It will be interesting to find out how the event fares on the West Coast.

So while you continue to work daily to promote dance's place in education, it's heartening to know that there are people on the performance side doing their part to eradicate the veil of mystery and exclusivity that has surrounded our artform for too long. Congratulations, Fall for Dance, on another homerun.

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Just for fun

Haley Hilton

Nov. 09, 2018 08:17AM EST

Let's Celebrate the Best of Fall by Watching Some Biscuit Ballerina Falling Friday Videos

Shelby Williams via @biscuitballerina

Fall is arguably the best season of the year, and "Falling Fridays" are arguably the best day of the week on the @biscuitballerina Instagram page. So, we thought it was only fitting that we combine the two "bests" for a fall-tastic post today!

Heaven bless @biscuitballerina for making us laugh day in and day out. SHE. IS. EVERYTHING.

Get ready to laugh 'til you cry, ladies and gentleman.

There's just nothing that can hit your funny bone like watching dancers eat it!

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[Lauren Wingenroth for Dance Magazine](#)

Nov. 08, 2018 12:48PM EST

When Can We Finally Talk About Why Boys In Dance Get Bullied?

A still from the new documentary, *DANSEUR*. Image courtesy *DANSEUR*

According to the new documentary *DANSEUR*, 85% of males who study dance in the United States are bullied or harassed. A quote in the film from Dr. Doug Risner, faculty member at Wayne State University, states, "If this scope of bullying occurred in any activity other than dance, it would be considered a public health crisis by the CDC."

So why is it allowed to persist in ballet? And why aren't we talking about it more? These are the questions that *DANSEUR* seeks to answer. But primarily consisting of dance footage and interviews with male dancers like ABT's James Whiteside, Houston Ballet's Harper Watters

and Boston Ballet's Derek Dunn, the film only addresses these issues superficially, with anecdotes about individual experiences and generalizations about what it's like to be a male dancer.

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[Mia Michaels, As Told to Haley Hilton via Dance Magazine](#)

Nov. 07, 2018 03:04PM EST

Mia Michaels Opens Up About Burning Bridges

Mia Michaels has learned the power of inspiring those she works with. Here, rehearsing Rockettes. Photo courtesy MSG

Dancers are human, which means they're bound to make mistakes from time to time, both on and off the stage. But what happens when those mistakes burn bridges? In an industry so small, is it possible for choreographers and performers to recover?

In a moment of vulnerability, three-time Emmy Award winning choreographer Mia Michaels opened up to Dance Magazine about some of the bridges she herself has burned, the lengths she's gone to in order to rebuild and the peace she's made with the new direction her career has taken because of them. —Haley Hilton

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[Haley Hilton](#)

Nov. 07, 2018 10:02AM EST

These 3 Dance Teachers Are All Our Second Mothers

Stacey Tookey and student at Camp Protégé via @sjtookey on Instagram

There are certain dance teachers out there who have a gift for making students feel loved, cared about, capable, encouraged and inspired—all at the same time. They're beautiful sparks of light in the midst of this competitive and at times exhausting industry.

Three of those special souls happen to have a gigantic reach through conventions and television, and have somehow made each and every one of us feel like they're our second moms. Don't believe me? Go take (or observe) class from anyone of them and then try to tell me they don't love you as their own!

Check 'em out below, and then share a time one of them said something that made you feel important and validated!

xoxo

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Nov. 06, 2018 08:40AM EST

Exercises to Solve Forward Head Posture and Realign Your Students

Thinkstock

The human head weighs somewhere between 8 and 12 pounds. For many of us, our youngest students included, that comparatively large weight spends on average at least a couple hours a day hunched over a screen. While you may not consider your students as average, there is no denying we spend more hours than ever looking down at handheld mobile devices. "I think of it as 'tech posture,'" says Blossom Leilani Crawford of Bridge Pilates, "when the head is forward and the shoulders are forward. People don't know where their heads are anymore, and you certainly can't turn well with the weight of your head forward."

Forward head posture seems to be the very antithesis of the open chest, lifted spine and presentational sensibility of most classical dance training. But beyond the aesthetics, this misalignment can affect balance and coordination in developing dancers and, at the extreme end, can be associated with nerve damage and pain down the arm.

According to Dr. Marshall Hagins, physical therapist for the Mark Morris Dance Group, there are really two things going on when you see forward head posture. First, the skull is projected forward in front of the body (as in when we look down at a phone). But then, because we are social creatures who want to see and interact with the world in front of us, the head rotates backward on the spine, thrusting the chin up and out. "The muscles in the front of the neck are short and relaxed," he explains, "while the muscles in the back, which are keeping the head from falling further, are lengthened and overworking." The neck muscles have a very high density of proprioceptors and the nervous system feedback is working to fight gravity all of the time, all of which can result in a levator scapulae that is overused and painful.

Hagins offers a tent analogy for balancing the head in three dimensions without simply resorting to a military posture. "All the surrounding neck muscles need to have just the right amount of tension to keep a heavy object, such as the head, balanced atop the tent pole of your spine," he says. "When it leans one way, the corresponding wire becomes loose and the other wires have to pull harder." He notes that it can still be possible for dancers to move in and out of the proper positions even if the resting posture is slouched. However, assuming such a posture for most of the day can lead to injury.

The phenomenon has caused Crawford to modify the abdominal exercises in her mat class. "I sometimes ask for the head to stay on the floor for the single-leg stretch or double-leg stretch," she says. "I call it 'angry turtle' when you work to draw the back of your head into the floor. Once that is understood, it is easier to transfer into lifting the head off the ground properly."

However, both Hagins and Crawford caution that dancers are often hypermobile and prone to overcorrecting, so it is important to focus on good postural habits and incremental changes so they don't move from one misalignment of the head and neck to another. Here are three simple exercises Crawford uses to help students find and feel where proper head alignment is in different planes of movement. They are great on their own, in any warm-up, or can be easily sprinkled into a Pilates mat routine.

Supine Head Float



Elena Prisco, age 17, student at Lake Tahoe Dance Collective. Photos courtesy of Thompson

1. Lie on your back, knees bent and feet planted, with a yoga block, or prop of similar height, under the shoulder blades. Let your head rest back into this big, chest-opening stretch, with your fingers interlaced, hands behind your neck so that your pinky fingers are against the base of your skull.
2. Float your head up to spine level, chin tucked in, hands helping to traction your neck long. Use exhales to activate the abdominals and keep ribs heavy and soft while your head is up. Hold for a few counts and then rest back into the stretch.
3. Repeat several times, being careful not to let the chin jut forward.

*If you are ready for more, float the pelvis up to spine level along with the head. Keep the pelvis in a neutral, untucked position.

Viral Videos

Katherine Beard for Dance Spirit

Nov. 06, 2018 10:33AM EST

Watch and Learn as Ciara Demonstrates 5 Fierce Dance Moves

screenshot via YouTube

If anyone's going to demonstrate how to break out some fresh dance moves it might as well be Ciara. This dancing diva is working on her seventh album, and everyone knows that any great album should be served with a side of dancing. So Ciara decided to show *Vogue* five of her fiercest moves—and we are here for every single one of them.

From the 1, 2 Step to Bucking, Ciara reminds us why we love her in this beautiful tutorial. We dare you to watch this and NOT bust a move. We can't wait to see what routines Ciara and her longtime choreographer Jamaica Craft pair with the tracks on her upcoming album. Whatever

they decide, we know we'll be in for a treat. Until then you can master Ciara's iconic dance moves with the help of the video below. We won't judge you for playing it on repeat.

Ciara Breaks Down 5 Iconic Dance Moves to "Dose" | Vogue www.youtube.com