Education Support

American Dance

Dance & Movement Vocabulary

ABSTRACT: To take the essence or essential meaning of an idea rather than a literal imitation.

ACCENT: An increase in stress, emphasis, or intensity within movement count.

ALIGNMENT: Placement of body parts.

ALLEGRO: A fast, lively tempo.

ARABESQUE: One leg supports the body, the other leg is extended behind the body.

ASSEMBLE: (ah-sahn-BLAY) Taking off from one foot and landing on two (both) feet.

ASYMMETRICAL: Not balanced in the conventional sense of exact correspondence or balanced proportion.

ATTITUDE: (ah-tee-TEWD) A position on one leg, the free leg is lifted in a forward, sideward, or backward direction with the knee bent at an angle and higher than the foot.

AXIAL: A movement around a stationary axis, non-locomotor or staying in one place.

BALANCE: (ba-lahn-SAY) A step starting in first or fifth position; leap lightly to one side landing in demi-plié.

BALL CHANGE: A quick transfer of weight from one foot to another.

BATTEMENT: (bat-MAHN) A controlled movement of the leg in which a straight leg is lifted from the hip and returned to the floor.

BEAT: The basic unit of a rhythmic measure.

BODY WAVE: A sequential movement of the body starting with the knees and moving through the hips, abdominal, chest, and head.

CAMEL WALK: Pedaled movement. Roll up to the ball of one foot, transfer weight to the other foot, the knee is bent.

CHASSE': (sha-SAY) A gliding movement (step, close, step).

CHANGEMENT: (shahnzh-MAHN) A scissor-like action of the legs where the feet change position.

CHOREOGRAPH: To make up or create a dance or combinations.

CHOREOGRAPHER: Person who creates combinations or entire dances.

CHOREOGRAPHY: The composition of a dance.

COLLAPSE: A sinking movement involving the release of tension as a whole.

CONTAGION: A ripple action; movement is passed from one dancer to another.

CONTRACTION: A muscular tension that produces a shortening of body parts

COUPE': (koo-PAY) A small intermediary step done as a preparation or impetus for some other step.

DANCE HANDS: Hands soft--pretend to hold an egg with the thumb and middle finger.

DEGAGE': (day-ga-ZHAY) Passing through the tendu position, the foot slightly disengages from the floor.

DEMI: Means small movement.

DEVELOPPE': (dayv-law-PAY) A movement in which the working leg is drawn up then extended. It can be done in any direction.

DIAGONAL: Three or more dancers lined at an angle.

DIG: Step without weight transfer.

DIMENSION: The relative size of movement or of the space.

DOUBLE STAG: A leap with both legs in a bent position.

DOWNSTAGE: A direction to indicate movement toward the audience.

DYNAMICS: Shading in the amounts of energy, intensity of power; subtle variations in the treatment of movement contrasts.

ELEVE': (ay-LEV) A gradual rising onto the balls of the feet, a controlled rise.

EXTENSION: An elongation or lengthening of the body or any of its parts.

FAN KICK: Straight leg kick which crosses in front of the supporting leg and circles around to the other direction. A kick circling 360 degrees.

FLEA HOP: Sliding hop directly to the side.

FLEX KICK: A kick where the foot passes the supporting knee first and then fully develops until the leg is straightened.

FLEXED FEET: Ankles in a flexed position so that the toes are pulled back toward the body.

FLEXION: A bending movement; a contraction of muscles around a joint that brings two body parts closer together.

FLOOR PATTERN: An imaginary line of path in space taken by the dancer as they move from place to place.

FOCUS: The Concentration on a fixed or moving point in space; indication of a fixed or moving point or object in space by the direction of movement or gaze.

FOUETTE': (fweh-TAY) Lift one leg and hop while turning, the leg stays in the air until after the hop.

GRAND BATTEMENT: Grand (meaning large) Battement (meaning beating). A Lifting movement of the free leg from a forward, sideward, or backward position. Also called a high kick.

GRAND: Means large movement.

GRAND JETE': (zhuh-TAY) A leap usually obtaining height and distance.

GRAPEVINE: A weaving movement; step- side-back-side-front; depending on where you want to start.

HALF TOE: Position of the foot with the heel off the ground with the weight on the ball of the foot.

HEAD SNAP: Head turns sharply to one side or the other.

HEAD TILT: Head moves to the side with the face in a forward direction as if you were trying to put the ear towards the shoulder.

HEEL DIG: Place heel forward with the ankle flexed; this movement takes no weight.

HITCH KICK: Starting from a passé, jump back on the passé leg and kick the other leg.

HOOK: A parallel passé where the foot is lifted to the supporting knee.

HOP: Jump off the floor on one foot and landing on the same foot.

HYPEREXTENSION: Extreme arch of the back, knees or arms.

IMPROVISATION: To perform without preparation.

INTENSITY: The relative degree of force or strength; the depth of feeling or concentration.

ISOLATION: Separation of body parts. Making one body part work independently of another body part.

JAZZ HANDS: Hands open with the fingers wide spread.

JAZZ LEAP: Single stag leap.

JAZZ WALK: A walk done in demi-plié position; the feet pointed forward with the abdominals lifted.

JETE': (zhuh-TAY) Leap; a jump from one leg to another.

JUMP: Taking off and landing on both feet.

KINESTHETIC SENSE: An internalized awareness of body placement and movement, and awareness of the relative force and range of movement.

KNEE HINGE: Knee bends with toe on floor and closes to supporting leg, then opens to other side.

LOCOMOTOR: A movement through space involving a change of location.

LUNGE: A movement where one leg is in a plié position and the other leg is extended.

LYRICAL: A style of dancing with a smooth flowing quality.

MODERN DANCE: A highly individualized form of artistic expression which began as a rejection of traditional ballet concepts; there is not a single approach to technique.

MUSCLE: A band of contractile (having the power of lengthening) tissue in the body, that affects bodily movement.

OBLIQUE: A facing position towards a corner or diagonal.

OPPOSITION: A position or movement in contrast to another position or movement of an opposite part of the body used to maintain balance.

PARALLEL POSITION: Feet and knees facing forward.

PASSE': (pa-SAY) The foot meets the knee of the supporting leg from one position to another.

PAS DE BOUREE': (pah duh boo-RAY) A sideways movement or transition step where a person steps behind, to the side, and then steps to the front.

PEDDLE: Changing weight from one foot to the other; the heel comes up first and the toe remains on the ground.

PENDULAR: The type of movement which is held then released to flow back and forth in a swinging action using gravity.

PERCUSSIVE: A movement quality which is quick and more aggressive in nature.

PETITE: Means small movement

PIROUETTE: (peer-WET) A turn executed on one leg and does not travel.

PIVOT TURN: A turn in place on the ball on the foot.

PLIE': (plee-AY) To bend the knees; DEMI: meaning small, the movement is stopped before the heels release from the floor.

POINTED TOES: Ankle must be extended and toes follow the line.

PORT DE BRAS: (pawr duh brah) The carriage, placement, and movement of the arms.

RECOVER: To resume original position.

RELEASE: The letting go of tension or energy.

RELEVE': (ruhl-VAY) Like an elevé but executed with a spring-like action.

ROND DE JAMBE: (rawn duh zhajnb) When the leg produces a circle pattern.

RHYTHM: The flow of movement in recurrent groupings resulting in a feeling of relationship.

SAUTE': (soh-TAY) A jump taking off from two feet at the same time.

SISSONE: (see-SAWN) Taking off from both feet and landing on one foot.

SOUTENU: (soot-NEW) A turn involving two steps

SPIN TURN: A turn stepping on one foot and bringing both feet together as you turn.

SPOTTING: A movement of the head in turns where the eyes are focused on a particular spot in the direction of the turn, and the head is quickly snapped back at the last possible moment to re-focus upon the same spot.

SKIP: Consists of a step and a hop done on the same foot.

SLIDE: Consists of a step and a drawing or dragging of the other foot.

STAGGER: Every other dancer moves forward or back.

STAG LEAP: A jazz leap jumping from both feet and placing one leg in a bent leg position and the other leg is straight.

STRADDLE: A position of the legs when both legs or extended out to the side.

STRETCH: The lengthening or enlarging of a muscle.

STYLE: A distinctive or characteristic manner of expressing an idea; a personal mode or form.

SUSPENDED: A quality of movement that creates the impression of defying gravity; floating, effortless movement.

SUSTAINED: Movement where energy is released equally in a smooth pattern.

SWINGING: Tension is held, then released to flow with gravity back and forth.

SYMMETRICAL: A balanced, even design; an even correspondence of design, space, rhythm, or position of the body.

SYNCOPATION: A temporary displacement of the normal stressed beats of a measure.

TAG: Additional measure or beats of music.

TEMPO: The rate of speed at which the music is played or that the movement occurs.

TORSO: Part of the body from the top of the shoulders to the bottom of the hips.

TENDU: (tahn-DEW) Foot brushes; the foot brushes along the floor to a pointed foot, the knees do not bend.

THREE STEP TURN: A complete turn in a straight line, using three steps.

TURN OUT POSITION: An outward rotation of the legs, the action taking place at the hip joints.

TEMPO: The rate of speed at which a movement occurs or in which the music is played.

TOE DIG: Place the ball of the foot beside the supporting foot, this movement does not take weight.

TRIPLET: A three-step pattern with the accent usually on the first step.

TURNOUT: A position of the legs with the feet and knees turned outward from the hips.

UPSTAGE: A direction indicating movement away from the audience.

VIBRATORY: A group of pressive moves performed in quick succession