

Choreography Part III - Teaching

In this final part of the series I will talk about how to teach successfully. Most points are geared towards teaching group numbers but can equally be adapted to teaching soloists.

- Make sure that you chose music that is on an album that is widely available. Do not supply copies - it is illegal!
- Every student learns in slightly different ways although I have found most need to actually do a move for it to get into their heads/bodies. Try and include different ways of describing or doing moves or your methodology of teaching - talk it through as well as dance it through
Students fall into the following categories:

Visual - need to see written notes

Aural - work best with listening so suggest they use a tape recorder

Physical/kinesthetic - need to actually do it and will need to practise transitions etc

- Give out printed copies of the choreography to every student. They immediately look daunted as you have tried to write everything down for them! Your choreographic layout could be a list of moves or a more complex one with timings, bars, and notes as well as moves.
- Get your students to write their own notes next to your description - the act of doing is better than a passive acceptance.
- Give the students an idea of the structure of the piece so they can work at home with the choreography and see how it all fits together or going to pan out.
- Dance it for them. They watch you perform. Therefore you have to know the choreography inside out. It doesn't inspire too much confidence if you can't remember it!
- If it is easy enough to teach in short segments - do a series of combinations (like for example Jillina teaches) - or work on short sections of music.
- Regular review from the beginning including a new move each time (as for example how Morocco teaches).
- Make sure you spend as much time on the ending as the beginning Work on the end first - that way always coming up to something you know well. Need to keep energy levels up in your class so you need to either throw in a juicy move or something a bit cheeky to get them to carry on projecting their energy!

- Assuming this is taught in a series of classes - at the start of each rehearsal session just pace the moves without the music - lets everyone see they need the music cues to know what's coming next. In a workshop situation this will be different as you wont have had the time to forget between classes
- Ask where the difficulties are before you switch on the music- most are transitions that are fine for you but you have to really analyze why they aren't getting it. Over work the transitions - practice makes perfect. Leads to a thorough understanding of each step and move.
- A good choreography is written to match the music - you should be able to point out cues and explain your move decision at any point.
- Set realistic goals. If they are beginners don't put too many demands on them. Don't expect them to retain it all in one or two sessions. But equally don't fall into the trap that people will learn faster just because they have been dancing for a while

Ways to rehearse:

- In your head - dance it, sing it, say it. Anticipate what comes next. Work through transitions; make up little rhymes if a particular link of combinations is hard to remember. The interdependent structure of words and music make both easier to remember.
- Repetition is the key to memorizing and mental rehearsal is a useful tool
- Make sure students know that things that seem obvious in class, when done at home outside the classroom can seem vague and harder to remember.
- They must listen to the music often. They will begin to notice cues in the music - which may be different to the cues you hear and have choreographed to - this is not wrong but may lead to a bit of outside classroom confusion. Patterns of movement that match patterns in the music become more obvious the better the choreography is known. You can then time you moves with the cues precisely.