

Scientific article on the topic:

The Role of Barre Exercises in Building Jazz Dance Technique

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Objective

The objective of this study is to identify the role of barre exercises in the process of learning jazz dance and to analyze their impact on the development of technical skills and coordination among students.

Methods

The study utilized the following methods:

1. *Observation*: Conducting observations of jazz dance classes that incorporated barre exercises.
2. *Interviews*: Surveying students and instructors about their perceptions and the effectiveness of barre exercises.
3. *Data Analysis*: Comparing student progress before and after the implementation of barre exercises in the curriculum.

Results

1. Students who regularly performed barre exercises showed significant improvement in their technical execution of movements.
2. The exercises facilitated a better understanding of terminology and foundational concepts in jazz dance, making the learning process easier.
3. Participants in the survey noted that barre exercises helped them develop coordination and sensitivity to movements.

Conclusions

Barre exercises play a crucial role in learning jazz dance, enabling students to overcome challenges associated with mastering technique. They not only enhance physical skills but also deepen the understanding of dance elements. It is recommended to actively incorporate barre exercises into training programs to achieve better outcomes in jazz dance education.

Introduction

Jazz dance is a multifaceted art form that combines elements of technique, improvisation, and expressiveness. Despite its popularity, learning jazz dance presents several challenges, including the mastery of complex terminology, numerous positions, and movements that are often unfamiliar in everyday life. Barre exercises play a significant role in the learning process, yet they are frequently undervalued as tools for developing technique and coordination.

Existing research highlights the importance of technical training in dance; however, there is a lack of attention to specific methods, such as barre exercises, and their impact on learning jazz dance. The question of how these exercises assist students in overcoming challenges associated with mastering technique remains largely unexplored.

The aim of this article is to investigate the role of barre exercises in the development of jazz dance technique. The objectives of the study include analyzing the influence of barre exercises on coordination, understanding dance elements, and the perception of terminology among students. Based on the findings, a set of recommendations will be proposed for instructors seeking to enhance their teaching methodologies in jazz dance.

Methodology

Foot Positioning Rules in Jazz Dance

In jazz dance, various foot positions are employed:

- *First Parallel Position:* In this stance, the hip joint aligns directly above the knee, which is positioned directly above the ankle. The width of this position will vary for each dancer, depending on their unique anatomical structure.
- *First Turnout Position:* Unlike classical dance, achieving a perfect turnout is not necessary in this position. A turnout angle of 90 degrees is adequate, as long as the knee is directed in line with the toes.
- *Second Parallel Position:* This position maintains similar principles to the first but features a wider stance.
- *Second Turnout Position:* The primary guideline here is to ensure that during a grand plié, the angle formed between the thigh and calf is 90 degrees, which is notably wider than in classical dance.
- *Third Position:* This is comparable to the third position in classical dance, though perfection in turnout is not required.
- *Fourth Turnout Position:* In this position, the heel of the front foot is aligned in front of the heel of the back foot. Again, achieving perfect turnout is not essential, and the distance between the feet exceeds that seen in classical dance.
- *Fourth Parallel Position.*

Key Notes:

- In jazz dance, a sixth position does not exist, as it is anatomically unfavorable due to weight being shifted toward the center.
- Similarly, a fifth position is not utilized in jazz dance.

Terminology and Technique of Jazz Dance Elements

Here's a revised version of your text:

- *Curve*: Primarily defined as "a bend in the upper part of the spine (up to the solar plexus)," this term indicates the direction of movement.
- *Arch*: Described as "a backward bend in the upper torso," the term "arch" primarily refers to the positioning of the body.
- *Body Roll*: This term is defined as "a series of torso tilts that involve the sequential movement of the body's center in the lateral or frontal plane," also known as a wave. It primarily describes the movement itself.
- *Contraction*: This can be characterized as the inward pulling and shortening of the body's center, located between the navel and the pubic bone in jazz dance. "Contraction" mainly involves the pelvis and its adjustments in position.

Combinations

- *Combination of Plié with Contraction and Flat Back:* This combination begins with a bow, as plié serves as the foundational exercise at the barre. It is performed in the I, II, and IV positions (both turned out and parallel), incorporating active arm movements, contraction, a flat back position, and a rise onto the toes immediately after the grand plié.
- *Combination of Battement Tendu with Contraction:* Executed "crosswise" in the III position, this combination includes contraction and plié. The second cross involves turns on the supporting leg, both toward and away from the barre.
- *Combination of Battement Tendu Jeté with Contraction and Arch:* This combination is performed in the first turned out position while facing the barre, emphasizing the maintenance of the arch position to help students retain a "square" alignment in their torso.
- *Combination of Grand Battement:* This is executed "crosswise" in the III position, featuring work on the toes while transitioning into plié and capturing the leg in the air.

The main challenge when working with experienced dancers lies in the ability to swiftly develop new vocabulary and integrate it into creative sequences that captivate students while further enhancing their dance technique.

Principles for Creating Jazz Dance Combinations

In the battement tendu combination, all the execution principles from classical dance are preserved while integrating numerous turns, jumps, and specific jazz techniques, which enhances the complexity and richness of the vocabulary.

A key characteristic of this combination is the precise alignment of the torso, coupled with the ability to establish focal points, emphasize movements, and quickly change directions.

Furthermore, the instructor incorporates jumps (executed with a small amplitude) and outlines ways to add complexity to the combination by:

- Utilizing the toes instead of the full foot,
- Increasing the amplitude of movements (executing kicks at maximum height rather than at 45 degrees with a torso tilt),
- Adjusting movement accents and introducing syncopated rhythms,
- Raising the tempo.

It is crucial to understand how to "rest" during the execution of intricate combinations, avoiding unnecessary energy expenditure on movements where the body should remain relaxed.

Once students have a firm grasp of the fundamentals of jazz dance, it becomes essential to teach them how to use these movements to enhance their expressiveness. Given the limited class time, each combination, including barre exercises, should serve multiple purposes. Therefore, it is vital to provide intricate and rich combinations that resemble brief études.

Creating Combinations: Techniques and Working with Music

The combinations presented in class should seamlessly integrate basic plié movements across various positions while incorporating a wealth of dance elements and transitions. This approach aims to cultivate the dancers' expressiveness and musicality, deeply immersing them in the vocabulary of the dance.

Techniques and Principles to Incorporate in Combinations:

- *Incorporation of Improvisation:* Allowing performers the freedom to express themselves.
- *Working to Music Rather Than Counts:* Emphasizing syncopated rhythms and extending movements.
- *Utilization of Plié Across All Main Positions (1, 2, 3, and 4):* Ensuring foundational strength.
- *Variability:* Executing the same movement with different amplitudes for dynamic expression.
- *Rapid Tempo Changes:* Incorporating a variety of swing rhythms to enhance musicality.
- *Level Changes:* Including movements to the floor and work on toes for versatility.
- *Changing Angles:* Engaging with both croisé and effacé positions by facing and turning away from the barre.
- *Subtle Adjustments in Foot Positions:* Encouraging fluidity in transitions.
- *Addition of Complex Elements:* Integrating pirouettes and jumps for technical growth.

It is essential to communicate to students that they are not merely performing mechanical tasks; they are dancing and connecting with the music, its mood, and every accent within it.

Styles in Jazz Dance

There are many styles within jazz dance, but two particularly stand out: Afro and Broadway. These styles are vibrant and full of life, each defined by its unique flair and energy, making them especially appealing to students!

Afro and Broadway Styles in Combinations

Dance Combination at the Barre: Battement Tendu Jeté in Afro-Jazz Style

How can we blend the uniqueness of Afro-jazz with the precision of classical dance? Let's examine this through a specific example.

In the battement tendu jeté combination styled in Afro-jazz, all rules for executing battement tendu jeté from classical dance are upheld while integrating distinctive Afro-jazz elements.

Key Features of the Combination:

- Lengthening the Spine: Ensures a well-defined torso structure.
- Relaxed Torso: Facilitates free movement of the hips.

All positions in the dance elements should be wide and elongated, emphasizing fluidity in execution—as if dancing on sand.

When performing this combination at a fast tempo, the leg in the jeté should not rise higher than 25-35 degrees, maintaining the integrity of the movement while embracing the Afro-jazz style.

Dance Combination at the Barre: Rond de Jambe Par Terre in Broadway Jazz Style

Broadway Jazz Combination: Transforming Barre Exercises into Full Choreographies

Bright and distinctive, Broadway jazz offers a vibrant introduction through the combination presented in this lesson.

Features of the Combination Using Broadway Jazz Style:

- *Blend of Soft, Flowing Movements and Sharp Conclusions:* The contrast between fluidity and precision is essential, creating a dynamic visual experience.
- *Syncopated Rhythm:* Emphasizing off-beat accents enhances the musicality and energy of the performance.
- *Use of Pressed Plié:* This technique adds depth and texture to the movements, enriching the overall expression.

In jazz dance, rond de jambe par terre is typically introduced in the third year of training, making this combination an appropriate choice for advancing students.

Character of Execution: A key aspect of Broadway jazz is the character in execution. It's vital to emphasize to students that creating a personal persona and conveying it to the audience is crucial in this style.

Transforming Barre Exercises into Full Choreographies

To make barre exercises engaging and stylistic, it's essential to incorporate original vocabulary, expressiveness, and partner interaction, ensuring students are adequately warmed up for the class.

Two Combinations Based on Adagio and Grand Battement:

Features of the First Combination: Adagio

- *Incorporation of a Large Dance Preparation:* This sets the stage for fluid transitions and prepares the body for movement.
- *Extensive Work on the Toes:* This emphasizes balance and poise, essential elements in both jazz and classical dance.
- *Use of Closed and Turned-Out Positions:* Maintaining classical elements while embracing the jazz style encourages versatility in movement.
- *Careful Attention to Music:* This involves incorporating both quick movements and slow extensions with the leg in the air, aligning with the musical phrasing.

To complicate this combination, consider utilizing group work, where students perform specific elements in turn, fostering teamwork and synchronization.

Features of the Second Combination: Grand Battement

This combination serves as a continuation of the first but introduces a completely different character:

- *A Wealth of Movements:* Engaging and dynamic, this combination incorporates a variety of steps to maintain interest and energy.
- *Partner Interaction:* Encouraging collaboration and connection between dancers enriches the learning experience and builds rapport.

- *Fast Tempo and Work with Musical Accents:* This highlights rhythmic contrasts, emphasizing the lively energy characteristic of Broadway jazz.

In this combination, clear positions are primarily maintained during the execution of the grand battement, while other elements and transitions are danced freely, allowing for individual expression from each dancer.

By blending these exercises with an engaging performance style, students can develop their technique while exploring their artistic voices within the framework of Broadway jazz.

Methodology: Data Collection

In the course of my research, I conducted lectures on basic jazz dance exercises at the barre for students of various skill levels. The group included 25 individuals aged from 18 to 40, comprising those who had studied to become choreographers several years ago, those who are currently training, and others seeking to enhance their qualifications. Over the course of five lectures and practice sessions—each lasting 1.5 to 2 hours—I was able to engage deeply with the students.

During the training sessions, I observed that jazz dance at the barre posed significant challenges for many dancers. This difficulty arises from the fact that many are accustomed to a strict structure in their training, where movements must be precise and combinations executed on count. However, in jazz dance, the focus shifts: it is essential to feel the music and convey the mood through movement, allowing the audience to sense the emotions and accents. I actively responded to students' questions throughout all sessions, which helped me analyze their understanding and revealed that they were genuinely trying to grasp how to control their bodies in jazz exercises at the barre.

The technique for jazz exercises at the barre also differs from classical training. While some exercises may seem simple, they require a different body stance and weight distribution. Students need time to acclimate to these new demands, as this is a completely different style of dance that necessitates flexibility and expressiveness. It is worth noting that the Afro dance style proved even more challenging for the students.

To gain a deeper understanding of the challenges students face, I employed observational methods, recorded lessons, and conducted interviews. By observing the execution of exercises, I noted which elements caused the most difficulty and which approaches helped students grasp the material more effectively. In the

interviews, I asked students about their training experiences, what they found challenging in jazz exercises, and how they perceive music and movement in this style.

Additionally, I conducted small experiments by incorporating elements of improvisation into standard combinations to assess how this affects students' understanding and performance of jazz dance. The results of these observations and surveys allowed me to develop recommendations for instructors to enhance teaching methodologies for jazz dance and tailor exercises to meet individual student needs.

These findings highlight that success in jazz dance at the barre requires not only technical skill but also an understanding of musicality and emotional expression, making this style both unique and demanding for performers.

Results

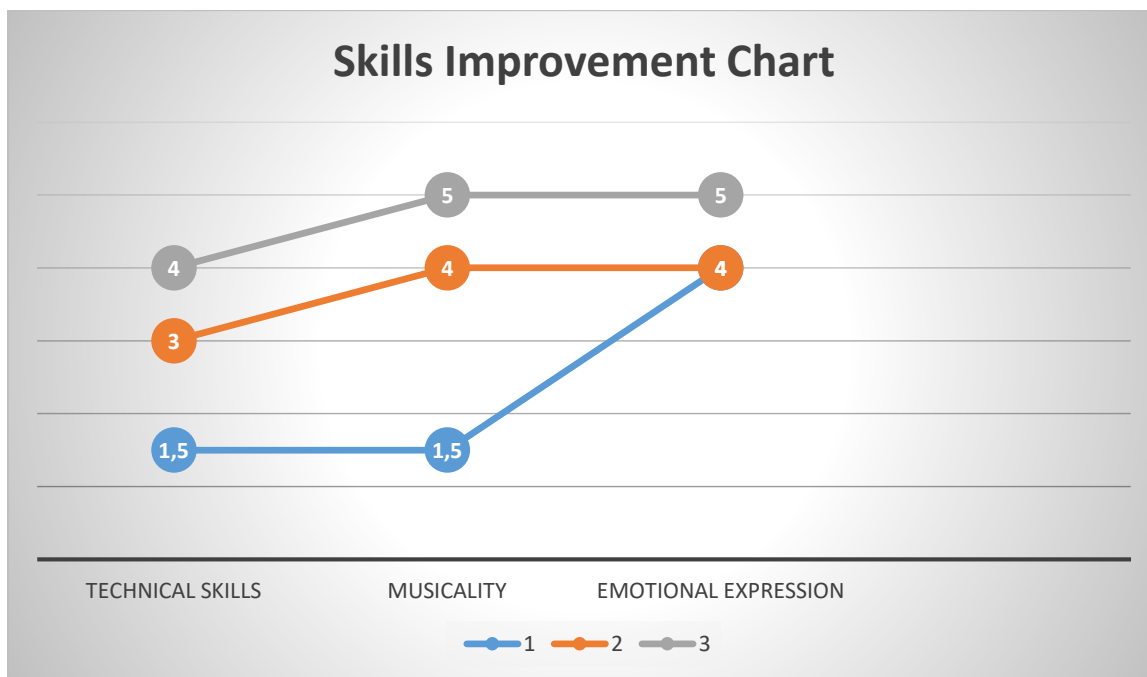
The results of my research revealed several key insights into the challenges and successes of students learning jazz dance exercises at the barre.

1. **Increased Awareness of Musicality:** Students demonstrated a noticeable improvement in their ability to feel and interpret music. Through exercises focused on musicality, many expressed newfound confidence in conveying emotions through movement.
2. **Understanding Body Mechanics:** Participants reported a deeper comprehension of their body mechanics in jazz dance. While they initially struggled with the different stance and weight distribution compared to classical dance, many adapted over the course of the sessions, showing greater control and flexibility.
3. **Struggles with Afro Dance:** The Afro style was identified as particularly challenging for students. Many found it difficult to transition from the structured movements of classical training to the more fluid and expressive nature of Afro dance, highlighting the need for tailored instruction in this area.
4. **Improvement in Technical Skills:** Observations indicated that students gradually improved their technical skills in executing jazz exercises. They became more proficient in maintaining proper alignment and balance while incorporating expressive elements.
5. **Engagement and Participation:** Active participation in discussions and Q&A sessions indicated a high level of engagement among students. Many expressed a desire for more improvisational elements in future classes, showing an eagerness to explore creativity within the framework of jazz dance.

6. Need for Individualized Instruction: The varying skill levels among students underscored the importance of personalized feedback and adaptive teaching strategies. Those with more experience benefited from advanced techniques, while beginners required additional foundational support.

7. Emotional Expression: A significant number of students reported that they felt more capable of expressing emotions through dance by the end of the sessions. This emotional connection enriched their overall performance and enjoyment of jazz dance.

Overall, the research demonstrated that while there are inherent challenges in learning jazz dance at the barre, focused instruction and an emphasis on musicality, body awareness, and emotional expression can lead to meaningful progress and a deeper appreciation for the art form.



Skills Improvement Chart Description:

This chart illustrates that technical skills were initially quite challenging and unfamiliar for the students. I believe this difficulty stemmed from their background in classical dance at the barre, making it hard for them to adjust their bodies to the

requirements of jazz exercises. However, the chart shows a gradual improvement as students began to engage with and feel their bodies more effectively in jazz dance.

In terms of musicality, students grasped the concept almost immediately. The key difference in jazz is that it's not always necessary to adhere strictly to the rhythm; instead, feeling the melody is paramount. This aspect was relatively easy for students to adapt to, as reflected in the chart.

Finally, emotional expression demonstrates that students were enthusiastic about this style of dance. Their internal state quickly aligned with the process, allowing them to enhance their skills and fully immerse themselves in the experience. Overall, the chart highlights the positive trajectory of skill development across these three critical areas.

Discussion

Interpretation of Results

The results presented in the Skills Improvement Chart demonstrate clear progress among students in the areas of technical skills, musicality, and emotional expression. Initially, the challenges faced by students in developing technical skills can be attributed to their background in classical dance, which often emphasizes strict structures and precision. Adapting to jazz exercises at the barre required changes in body awareness and movement mechanics, highlighting the necessity for flexibility and expressiveness in this dance style.

Interestingly, students quickly grasped musicality, suggesting that the internal rhythms and improvisational elements of jazz were familiar and relatable to them. This supports the notion that jazz dance encourages a more intuitive approach to movement, allowing dancers to focus on feeling the music rather than adhering to strict timing. The ease with which students adapted to this aspect underscores the importance of fostering a musical connection in the educational process.

Emotional expression emerged as a significant area of growth, reflecting students' enthusiasm for jazz dance. Their ability to establish a personal connection with this style enhanced their overall perception and skill development. This emotional engagement is crucial, as it not only improves performance quality but also fosters a deeper understanding of the art form.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite the encouraging results, there are several limitations to note. The sample size of 25 students may not fully represent the broader population of dancers, particularly given the diversity in prior training and experience. Future research

could benefit from a larger and more diverse sample to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how various backgrounds influence the learning process in jazz dance.

Additionally, the study primarily focused on immediate skill improvement over a short period. Longitudinal studies could investigate how these skills develop over time and what long-term impacts training in jazz dance has on overall dance proficiency. Exploring the psychological aspects of emotional expression in dance—such as how different teaching methods affect students' ability to connect with their own emotions—would also be valuable.

Finally, examining the specific challenges students face when learning Afro dance, as noted in the results, requires further investigation. Future studies might explore targeted teaching methods that facilitate the transition for students accustomed to classical techniques to various dance styles.

It is important to highlight that combining different dance styles, such as jazz and Afro, can enrich students' experiences and deepen their understanding of diverse movement approaches. Research dedicated to integrating various dance genres may open new avenues for teaching and studying dance.

Overall, this study lays the groundwork for understanding the complexities of teaching jazz dance at the barre, emphasizing the interplay between technical skills, musicality, and emotional expression, while also identifying avenues for future research.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to identify the role of barre exercises in the process of learning jazz dance and to analyze their impact on the development of technical skills and coordination among students. Through a combination of observation, interviews, and data analysis, the study revealed several key findings.

Students who regularly engaged in barre exercises demonstrated significant improvements in their technical execution of movements, indicating that these exercises are essential for skill enhancement. Furthermore, barre exercises facilitated a better understanding of terminology and foundational concepts in jazz dance, thereby simplifying the learning process. Survey participants highlighted that these exercises helped them develop greater coordination and sensitivity to their movements.

In conclusion, barre exercises are vital in the educational framework of jazz dance, providing students with the tools to overcome technical challenges. They not only enhance physical capabilities but also contribute to a deeper comprehension of dance elements. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that barre exercises be actively incorporated into jazz dance training programs to achieve optimal educational outcomes. This integration will ultimately lead to more proficient and expressive dancers.

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