Psychosocial Factors Affecting Dance Auditions

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*Psychosocial Factors Affecting Dance Auditions*

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Senior Thesis: Lee Honors College

Senior Capstone Project: Department of Dance

“Assessment of Psychosocial Stressors in Dance Auditions”
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Artistic Statement

My work as a dancer can be boiled down to fascination with the human body, the human mind and the way the two respond to the world. I have always tried to find that perfect balance of artistry and intellect: both education and creativity as coexisting priorities. My passion and innate personality have led me to this middle ground where I strive for integration of the two at all times. I love science, reason, and logic but this must coincide with my love for individuality, spirituality, philosophy, and open-mindedness. With interests in dance and kinesiology, I have created a career path and movement style that incorporates my movement background and educational tendencies.

I approach dance through my scientific understanding of the body and my willingness to challenge those boundaries. My movement vocabulary comes from contemporary jazz and modern dance with a pedestrian influence. Pulling from my early training in Chicago-style jazz and later exposure to modern dance and gesture, I have found my body’s niche in groundedness and athleticism, with circular flow and organic twists. I try to balance or contrast with high energy accents and dramatic level changes. I like to explore how one is influenced by another as a result of natural forces, cultural differences, or intimate relationships. There is always the push-and-pull of logistical versus subjective differences and how I can get my movement to express the two. In the end, those I interact with artistically will leave with exposure to new ideas and an insight to the fusion of my interests as they radiate from my movement. Balancing intellectual understanding and self-awareness with an openness towards others so that they may challenge my movement as I stay energetically tuned into the surrounding environment. My work often reflects my current thoughts on conflicts within one’s self or between two people and how the idea of this balance may be the key to it all.
ABSTRACT: Assessment of Psychosocial Stressors in Dance Auditions

Purpose: Competitive environments like auditions magnify the importance of optimal performance for dancers and often create considerable pressure for them, increasing the potential for injury. The purpose of this pilot study is to assess the relationship between psychological stressors and audition processes, evaluate the difference between significant psychological stressors of professional versus collegiate dancers and identify correlations between audition-related stressors and injury occurrence during auditions.

Methods: Twenty-three professional dancers and thirty-eight collegiate dancers were recruited from a professional modern company and a Division I university dance department during an audition. Subjects participated using two validated surveys expanded for this project: The Dancer Experiences Survey and The Athletic Coping Skills Inventory. Injury history, stress management, fear, relationships, motivation, health behaviors, and general disposition were assessed prior to the audition experience. Narrative comments were also collected. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.

Results: More professional dancers (43%) report feeling comfortable with the audition process than collegiate dancers (20%). The professional dancers’ top reported stressors included: level and consistency of motivation, psychological demands of training, support from others and feedback from other dancers. Two stressors were ranked highly by both professional and collegiate dancers: relationship with choreographers and comfort/familiarity with the audition. Of collegiate dancers, 16% reported a current injury while 35% reported concealing a current injury; 21% of professional dancers reported a current injury while 17% reported concealing one. Thirty percent of dancers in each group reported having been injured during auditions and 14% of dancers in each group reported sustaining an injury at the current audition. Self-reported descriptions of the audition ranged from nerve-wracking, intense and tiring to invigorating, motivating and fulfilling.

Conclusions: Data may indicate that dancers are unable to attain peak performance at their auditions due to anxiety or stress. This implies a need for auditions practices that psychologically prepare dancers for peak performance. Aggregate data from additional professional companies will be collected to provide a larger and more reliable database for final analysis and for developing future studies regarding stress and auditioning.
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Title: Assessment of Psychosocial Stressors in Dance Auditions

Authors (deceased, if applicable) and Institutions as they will appear in meeting materials:
Catherine McDonagh, B.A. Student, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, USA;
Jane Bence, MPA, MA, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, USA;
Kandil Almaz, DPT, Health Dante's Clinic CDG Dance Company, San Francisco, CA, USA;
Carrie Jankowski, D.C., ATC, Kalamazoo Center for Medical Studies, Michigan State University, Kalamazoo, MI, USA

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Sincerely,

Virginia Willmerding, Ph.D.
IADMS Annual Program Committee Chair

Hollis M. Johnson, M.F.A
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Bibliography


