Jazz Unit Guide

Name:_____________________________

Jazz Skills and Vocabulary

Isolations- moving one body part at a time.
Forced Arch- High on the balls of your feet (releve) and in demi plie (bent legs).
Jazz Square- 4 step pattern that makes a square; box step.
Grapevine- Sideways traveling step, alternating crossing in front and back.
Jazz Walk- Walk/ steps done in forced arch.
Ball Change- Change of weight using the ball of the foot.
Pas de Bourre- Bourre step; back, side, front.
Pivot Turn- Turning/ changing direction with both feet connected to the floor.
Chasse- To chase.
3 Point Turn- A turn completed in 3 steps, right or left.
Chaines- In a chain, links, series of rapid turns.
Pirouette- Spin, whirl.
En Dehors- Outside (related to the direction of a turn).
En Dedans- Inside (related to the direction of a turn).
6 Step Pirouette- 6 step pattern followed by an en dehors pirouette.
Grand Battement- Large beat; kick.
Saut De Chat- Jump of the cat.

The Transition to Modern Jazz Dance

The 1950s saw jazz dance evolve into what we know today as modern jazz dance. This transition was the result of gradual changes in the style of Broadway choreographers.

Today, jazz dance is present in many different venues and different forms. Jazz dance thrives in dance schools and remains an essential part of musical theater choreography; it is sometimes interwoven with other dance styles as appropriate for the particular show. Jazz dancing can be seen in some music videos, and even a number of Las Vegas showgirls are jazz dancers. Jazz Dance can also be seen on the hit show, "So You Think You Can Dance", and is performed by dance companies around the world.
Jazz Technique

Technique is the foundation for all dance movement. A strong technical foundation enables a dancer to focus on the stylistic and performance aspects of dance. Technique is essential for jumps and turns, where correct posture is needed to properly execute such moves. Also, jazz dancers' strong and sharp movements are greatly aided by a good background in ballet technique.

Center control is important in jazz technique. The body's center is the focal point from which all movement emanates, thus making it possible to maintain balance while executing powerful movements.

Jazz classes require some form of moderate intensity stretching in order to warm up the muscles and help prevent injuries. Some techniques used in the warm up consist of elongating leg muscles and strengthening the core to prepare for skills. Isolations, sharpness, and precision can be present in jazz. However, there are some choreographers who prefer fluidity in movement, making it more contemporary jazz.

Notable Directors, Dancers, and Choreographers

- Katherine Dunham, considered the grandmaster of jazz dance technique. She was a key inspiration to most modern jazz dance legends.
- Jack Cole, considered the father of jazz dance technique. He was a key inspiration to Matt Mattox, Bob Fosse, Jerome Robbins, Gwen Verdon, and many other choreographers.
- Bob Fosse, a noted jazz choreographer who created a new form of jazz, inspired by Fred Astaire and the burlesque and vaudeville styles.
- Gus Giordano, a highly influential jazz dancer and choreographer.
- Eugene Louis Facciuto (aka Luigi), a dancer who in the 1950s created a warm-up routine designed to prepare his body for dancing after being paralyzed in a car accident. Luigi is the Innovator of Jazz Dance.
- Jerome Robbins, choreographer for a number of hit musicals, including Peter Pan, The King and I, Fiddler on the Roof, Gypsy, Funny Girl, and West Side Story.
- Gwen Verdon, known for her roles in Chicago, and Sweet Charity.
- Mia Michaels, Sonya Tayeh, Tyce Diorio, Travis Wall: Gained popularity from the show SYTYCD, bringing new ideas and concepts to jazz dance.