

## Being a Smart Teacher: The Importance of Task Analysis on a Skill

When working with dance students it is important to be able to identify the student's difficulty achieving a dance move to better help the student succeed. There are many teachers out there who do not have this skill and will make the student endlessly practice the move over and over, producing a fatigued body and defeated dancer. By performing a task analysis on a dance move, a teacher can see clearer what abilities comprise that move, test the student for the abilities, and find the missing link in mastering that skill (Magill & Anderson, 2013). Furthermore, looking deeper into their individual abilities will increase the educator's knowledge on what skills or more advanced dance moves the student will achieve easier in the future, also known as prediction (Magill & Anderson, 2013). This helps in casting dance teams and strengthens the odds of winning and performing a successful routine.

When looking at a leap, consisting of a preparation, airtime, and landing, looking at Edwin Fleishman's "taxonomy of human perceptual motor abilities" (Magill & Anderson, 2013, p. 59) is helpful in identifying the abilities underlying the skill. The leap uses multi-limb coordination when working on the skill in a closed environment (Magill, 2013). When performed in an open environment, during a group routine, the leap needs to possess more abilities like reaction time and rate control (Magill, 2013). More importantly than perceptual motor abilities, dancers must acquire physical proficiency abilities to artistically master any dance move (Magill, 2013). In the leap, the advanced use of explosive strength, dynamic flexibility, and gross body coordination would greatly improve the movement (Magill, 2013). Furthermore, there are many more physical proficiency abilities that provide a baseline in dance, like extent flexibility, gross body equilibrium, and stamina that should be observed in all dancers (Magill, 2013). Without the mastery of them teachers will find many holes in the dancers overall technique and find the mastery of new skills difficult.

By looking at the abilities in a skill, it becomes easier to identify the flaw in the execution. Abilities provide a checklist to achieving a skill. When trying to find out why a dancer cannot perform a leap, I would test each ability to find which one needed strengthened and then move forward with that facilitation. If the dancer completes the "ability checklist" and has a mastery of each skill and still cannot perform the skill, I would infer that it is not a motor ability problem.

There are many other obstacles that dancers have when trying to execute an advanced skill, whether it be psychological, the way the move was taught, lack of practice or drive, etc., each of these requiring different teaching action plans. The creation of a safe, predictable, motivational environment with "good stress" is crucial to student's development (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2000). But, we would never know that it was just a mental block if we did not have the

knowledge to dissect a skill and look just at the abilities, providing a higher quality of dance education.

#### References

- Magill, D., & Anderson, D. (2013). *Motor learning and control: Concepts and applications* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Pensgaard, A. M., & Roberts, G. C. (2000). The relationship between motivational climate, perceived ability and sources of distress among elite athletes. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 18, 191-200.