

## Dance Isn't Just Cool, It's Awesome!

Dancers are not unlike hockey players, soccer players and other athletes in many ways. For example, they train on a daily basis with daily technique classes followed by rehearsals. Just like any athlete, they put in a full day of high-energy activity.

Like team athletes, dancers also belong to or work for a specific organization. In the world of sports we call them teams. In the dance world we call them companies. Because dance is an international art form, there are ballet companies around the world and it is not uncommon for dancers to join more than one company during their careers. However, in the dance world, unlike the sports world, a company member (dancer) may do guest performances with other companies. This allows them to perform under different directors, learn new roles or share roles that they are known for.

Depending on the sport, players are often trained for a specific role such as “guard” or “running back”. In a dance company we have the corps de ballet which is comprised of the largest group of dancers. Others will be second soloists, first soloists, principal dancers and character dancers.

We also have apprentices who are the “farm team of dance”. They are generally recent graduates of a professional dance training program who are in the process of adapting to a professional schedule. They dance the same ballets that a professional company does but they don't generally perform as often nor do they dance the lead roles.

The word “repertoire” refers to a collection of dance works a company presents. We call them ballets, dance works or choreographic works. A repertoire is not unlike a collection of paintings, sculptures or other works of art that are kept in a special place and displayed for the public to see. In this respect, a dance company is very much like an art gallery or museum because it maintains a collection of dance works (some old, some new and in a variety of styles) it can present over a period of time. It can also add new works to the repertoire.

In sports you play a game once and it is over. There is a winner and a loser. In the dance world we have what is called a season which is a relatively short period of time during which we repeat the same work or works nightly. While the corps usually remains the same, the key roles may be danced by different dancers. This provides the audience with an opportunity to see how different dancers interpret the same role. Furthermore, it allows the dancer to enjoy dancing the role more often. It is like playing a game that has the same rules and even the same score but arrives at that score differently every time. Every move is choreographed so the dancer knows what comes next. His or her creativity is in the execution of the movement coupled with the emotional quality used to tell a story or create a mood. Nonetheless, the ballet is a little bit different every day and their bodies respond differently to the challenge of performing depending on how the dancer feels.