

Street Dance Fact File

What is Street Dance?

Street dance is an umbrella term for various dance styles that originally evolved outside of dance studios in spaces such as streets, parks, playgrounds, and nightclubs and which form part of hip hop culture. Street dance's earliest styles were created largely by African Americans and later Latinos, include breaking, which was created in The Bronx, New York in the 1970s, whilst popping and locking originated on the West Coast during the same decade. Several other subsequent styles fall under the street dance umbrella including house, hip hop, krump, turfing and flexing. In London, breaking, popping and locking are dominant styles.



Key Facts

- Street dance styles can be improvisational and social in nature, encouraging interaction and contact with other dancers and spectators and in direct relation to the rhythms and styles of the music.
- There is normally a 'battle' element central to the dance styles – competitive one-upmanship which can be informal or formalised competition.
- Still relatively young as a dance style, street dance has heavily influenced popular culture and can be seen on music videos and commercials.
- The UK has developed a vibrant hip-hop and street dance scene with many regular battles and events.

What Is Happening in Street Dance Today?

Successful hip hop theatre companies include:

- ZooNation, who presented the award-winning 'Into the Hoods' in the West End.
- Boy Blue Entertainment, who won an Olivier Award for 'Pied Piper' and 'Avant Garde Dance.'
- Breakin' Convention, an annual hip-hop dance theatre festival at Sadler's Wells in London.

There are also numerous dancer/choreographers, including Robby Graham, Botis Seva, Vicki Igbokwe and Ivan Blackstock, presenting work which blends street dance and contemporary dance styles. Established contemporary choreographers Akram Khan, Russell Maliphant and Richard Alston have all recently worked with hip hop artists.

Hip hop dancers still use free, open spaces to practise and socialize. Until recently, the Trocadero Centre in Piccadilly and The Southbank Centre have been popular places to meet, train and freestyle, as well as Charing Cross station subway.

The Key Features of Street Dance

- Movements can be initiated and isolated to specific body parts, for example hips or shoulders, with movements having sharp changes of direction and focus.
- A lot of movement will lead from how the torso is reacting to the music.
- Accented beats and syncopated rhythms are paired with strong, sharp (percussive) contractions of the centre of body and other body parts, such as the elbows.
- There is a strong relationship between the different layers of the music production, which in turn denotes various movement dynamics. For example, this could mean certain moves are hard, soft, weighty, light/airy, sharp, smooth or emotive, depending on what the music dictates.
- The ground is important: downward stressed grounded movements and quick, short steps are interspersed with long, smooth steps with the use of still held positions (freezes).
- Most moves have a lot of strength and power behind them, this power is normally gained from the dancer thinking 'from the floor up,' in terms of the energy travelling through their body.



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