

# Writing a Dance Critique

*Critique:* an exercise involving careful judgment or judicious evaluation

## Step 1:

Watch, listen, and experience the performance with an open mind. Do not view the dance as if it were a movie; you must involve yourself and be an active participant.

## Step 2:

Do a little research. While a critique is not a term paper, having some background knowledge can help you put the work in context. Possible items to look up and make notes on are the choreographer, the dance, date and year of the world premiere, the composer, the dance company, and the principal dancer(s).

## Step 3:

Get ready to write the critique. The following prompts may help you to write your critique:

### Movement

- What movements did you observe?
- What body actions did the dancers perform?
- Which parts of the body were emphasized?
- Were the dancers crawling, leaping, slithering, jumping, spinning, etc.?
- Was the dance sharp or sluggish? Deliberate or explosive?
- What forms did the dancers' bodies employ? You can relate these to letters.

### Choreography

- What was the structure of the dance?
- How did the dancers relate to each other?
- Were the dancers alone (solo), in pairs (duet), in groups (trio = 3; quartet = 4, etc.)?
- Was there repeated movement? What was it?
- Was the dance a narrative (did it tell a story)?
- Was the dance abstract (without form or story)?
- Did the work have a clear beginning, middle, and end?

### Space

- How did the dancers move through space?
- Where did the movement occur?
- What can you say about the use of entrances and exits? Where they effective?

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## Performance

- What were the technical and expressive abilities of the dancers?
- What made a particular performer stand out?
- Were the dancers focused and energetic?

## Music

- Was the music fast or slow?
- Was the music more rhythmic or lyrical?
- Did the music evoke a specific emotional response?
- In your opinion, is this music easy to count and follow or is it irregular?

## Staging

- Were the costumes appropriate for the dance?
- Did the lighting focus attention or distract? Did it help create the mood?
- Were there sets? Did they add to the performance?
- Was the use of costumes and/or sets meaningful?

## Personal Response

- Did the dance remind you of anything?
- Did the dance make you happy or sad? Why?
- What did the dance communicate to you?
- What stood out the most?

## Overall Reaction

- Can you make any connections between the performance and what you've learned?
- What impression did the dance make?
- What did you learn about dance from this performance?
- Did the performance create any questions for you?

## Step 4:

Write the critique. Remember, when you voice an opinion, it must be backed up with actual experiences. In other words, you cannot say "the dance was very emotionally moving"; you can say "the slow, deliberate movements of the dancers expressed deep pain and grief". Describe, do not tell!

## Step 5:

Reread, edit, proofread, read aloud, have someone else read your critique, and take it to the writing center. Remember to italicize the name of a dance just as you would the title of a book. Example: *Giselle*