

Breaking chains!

Hip-hop and contemporary dance have to look over the fence to create a cool dance lingo

Marco Wehr

The bottom line is that we consequently face a Catch-22 situation.

Elements of contemporary dance are outdated. They are only of limited suitability for interpreting the themes and moods of the present day in dance. This applies to an even greater degree to classical and modern dance. On the other hand, we encounter urban dance, which arrives fresh and full of energy and reflects important aspects of our attitude toward life. Unfortunately, with its forced authenticity, it puts itself in chains and never really gets out of its "own cage".

What can be done? The only way to resolve this dilemma is to take a hard look at the strengths of contemporary dance and urban dances and amalgamate them! This is how modern-day dance can evolve.

Thus, the question arises as to how the styles can benefit from each other?

(...)

Upon closer examination, one sees that contemporary dance generally works with the space more than urban dances do. Many choreographers use the stage with a finesse which comes close to that of an architect. This is demonstrated in solo as well as duo work, and of course in ensemble work. In principle, a greater variety of "types of space" are used choreographically than is the case with urban dance.

In addition, it is interesting that space and time are convoluted in a varied manner in contemporary dance. The timing in the choreographies occurs at different levels of abstraction.

(...)

Albeit, it must be clearly emphasized that the urban styles in terms of individual movement, as well as group movement in part (e.g. chain reaction), work "in time" with considerably more sophistication since many movements are not as vigorous or expansive! In this regard, contemporary dancers would do well to take a close look at the fingers and feet of the urbans. One could say that the macrotiming in contemporary dance is more refined. In urban dance it's definitely the microtiming.

Succeed in combining these various qualities and completely unexpected new dynamics would be possible. (...)

Marco Wehr, Art director of Hochschule for contemporary & urban dance on stage in Zürich (HF-ZUB)

The full article you may find from June 2018 in the book:

Power of Diversity, Theater der Zeit Verlag, Berlin