



## "Is competitive dance right for me?" - [A guide for parents](#)

*Written By Robyn Tedesco*

*Director of the "Inspire Dance Challenge" Competition*

*Principle of Adjudicators Certification of Excellence*

*President of the Move With Grace Dance Studios group*

*November 5th, 2016*

### *About Dance Studios and Methods of Instruction*

Many misconceptions exist about the dance industry since the advent of television shows like *So You Think You Can Dance*, *The Next Step* and of course the very popular but overly dramatic portrayals in *Dance Mom's*. Rest assured there are different dance studios with very different approaches all across North America. Depending on how you personally "Measure Success," it is up to interpretation what is or is not a good studio or method.

In some of the TV portrayals of dance studios, the dramatic storyline would have you believe that the competitive dance scene is cutthroat within the studio team itself leaving you perhaps entertained but thinking "There is no way I am putting my daughter or son in a place like that!" In my opinion this has been a tremendous disservice to Dance as both an Art form and Competitive Dance as a sport. There are studio environments that may use similar tactics to these programs, but far and away most directors of studios that I know personally are all about **building their children and team up** without the absolute focus being on winning a small plastic trophy or medallion.

In our dance competition, we have regular contact with over 100 different studio directors from across Ontario and Quebec. I can confidently tell you that the majority of the people teaching these athletes at the competitive level believe the personal development journey for students is their true motivation. The Dance Team and competitions are a vehicle for developing kids and their confidence, it is certainly that way in our studio operations. We have to remember that what we see on Television as "Reality TV" is actually "scripted reality" with imposed storylines designed to create conflict to insight dramatic entanglements and keep the viewer watching the show.

My goal in presenting this guide is to help enlighten and inform on the realities of Dance Competition and to assist you in finding some resolution to the question "Is Competitive Dance right for me?" I truly hope you find this informative, and of value as you consider this activity for your family.

Robyn

### **Dance as a Sport**

Many people do not realize that Dance fits two categories of activities being both an Art form and a Sport. Similar to Martial Arts, dance is subcategorized into different disciplines or “Styles” which incorporate recognized steps or movements in combination that allow this segmentation.

Dance styles generally are the same world wide in the major stage disciplines, (Tap, Jazz, Ballet, Etc.) however there is no world governing body for dance as there is for Gymnastics or Figure Skating.

Like any athletic activity, dance requires practice and repetition, physical conditioning and endurance, flexibility and balance. The introductory program (Pre competitive) is designed as a bridge between recreational and competitive dance and begins with two hours of training per week and less competition events. Part time competitive dancers can expect to train in technical elements of the styles presented between 3 and 5 hours per week plus choreographic time (learning their routines for competition) Full competitive program students train more than 6 hours per week in technical classes plus choreography to maintain the expected level of quality to compete at the elite level.

#### ***Benefits:***

- ❖ Dance builds strength, endurance, balance, flexibility and is an excellent cardiovascular exercise
- ❖ Mastery requires discipline and practice - an excellent method for training concentration and focus. Dancers training high hours per week, tend to be better students due to focus.
- ❖ Dance is an emotional art form, the presentation when done well involves passion and storytelling. It is a wonderful experience for the performer and for the audience. It is beauty defined through movement.

### **Dance Events**

The Events where Dance Competition occurs are privately owned and rules for qualifying, challenging and winning vary by event. In basic terms however the format is typically as follows:

- A “Routine” is a choreographed dance in a particular style which may be a soloist, duet, Trio or Group presentation. The piece is performed on a stage in front of 1 to 7 (typically 3) adjudicators that are considered an authority in dance, either as highly qualified teachers, performers or recognized master of the generally accepted core dance styles.

- Adjudicators assign a mark or value to the routine based on some combination and weight of percentages between technical merit, performance value, choreography and costuming. Marks are typically averaged, and in some cases the highest and lowest are deleted.
- Awards and trophies are presented at the end of sessions, where groupings of the same style, size and age of routines have been marked and compared in categories. Often placements and trophies are awarded.
- Events are presented on weekends, in Ontario the season is between February and June in large performance theatres or ballrooms on built stages. Event lengths can be between 1 and 5 days, but usually three Friday to Sunday.

Dance events are typically free for attendance as an audience member. The cost of entry is paid by the studios attending through entry fees of the routines.

Performing at events is a very exhilarating experience for the team, and it's members. The truth is that many lifelong friendships are developed at dance competitions between members of different teams. Most event organizers have awards to promote good sportsmanship or "Spirit" Competitions like to emphasize the celebration of the performance made by all of the dancers. Backstage etiquette usually dictates congratulating performers as they exit when you are about to perform.

### **Why do some studios compete and some do not?**

I have involved our studios in competitive dance since 2004, for many reasons. I believe that most competitive studios share these beliefs in common:

- Dance competition elevates the training prerequisite and quality of the studio overall. *By seeing where the expectation is nationally the training quality remains current and not solely syllabus based.*
- Dance competition gives students a path to improvement beyond recreational and examination training. *The development of students exhibiting talent can be challenged by the increased training and performance opportunity. The personal development of individuals is greatly enhanced by the team dynamic.*
- Dance competition is a very FUN family activity. *If you've seen a hockey tournament, you will already know what this means. Weekends at competition are a reason to celebrate our kids, their achievement both as individuals and as a group & comradery between parents is excellent.*

I have heard studio directors and parents from Non Competitive schools claim that the environment is "not conducive to personal growth" or that in some way measuring yourself either individually or in a team is in some way wrong - pointing to

shows like *Dance Moms* as poor examples of how your student should be treated in a classroom.

- First of all - I agree that if a studio uses methods similar to how motivation is portrayed on some of these TV programs it would be damaging to some children's self esteem. *However I stress that far and away the majority of studios in competitive dance are not operating with these methods. It is more to do with your due diligence as a parent to find a studio that matches your parenting style. Winning at all costs should not be the primary motivation of doing competitive dance, in my opinion.*

### **Costs and Benefits**

The thing is at this level of dance training, your child is not just learning a routine to put on stage. Here is an article I LOVE that a dad wrote about his daughter's dance involvement.

#### **TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2015 *Shad Martin Dance Dad Blog***

*Why I don't pay for Dance anymore!*

*The other night someone asked me "Why do you pay so much money for your girls to dance?"*

*Well I have a confession to make, **I don't pay for dance.** Personally, I couldn't care less about dance. I grew up in a family of 4 boys and no girls. The "Nutcracker" was something you did on a dare off of the high dive at the pool or something you unpleasantly surprised your brother with. Up until the day I met my wife if I were asked to go to Swan Lake I would have asked if we were water skiing or fishing.*

*So if I am not paying for dance what am I paying for? I pay for those moments when my daughters become so tired they **want to quit but don't.** I pay for those days when my daughters come home from school and are "too tired" to go dance but **go anyway.** I pay for my daughters to learn to be **graceful.** I pay for my daughters to learn to **take care of their body.** I pay for my daughters to learn to **work with others** and to **be good teammates.***

Read more [Shad Martin Blog Article](#)

The costs for Dance are fairly comparable to that of any elite amateur sporting activity. There are costs for travel, the entry for the events, the costumes, the choreography the classes and other accessories, like stage make-up etc. At our studios we charge a fair price for all of our products and when we are able to garner savings we pass it along to our families.

I will tell you that price should be a consideration but not your motivation in this area of the dance industry. A quality studio will have more expensive faculty with better training and experience that they will pass along to your student. Facilities are important and to have a state of the art dance training centre it is a direct benefit to a good functioning team. Costuming can be expensive in the competitive dance

arena, with an average competitive dance costume ranging from \$100-\$500 depending on the seamstress, materials, crystal applications etc.

Overall expenses vary greatly depending on the studio, but I will tell you as a guide, our Part time competitive program has a \$1500.00 CAD yearly package cost per student as an entry point. A full competitive program with our studios start around \$2500.00 CAD per student but our average full competitive member is between \$5000.00 and \$7000.00 per season. I know we are not the most expensive but we certainly are not the least. If pricing is your primary motivation I would discourage you from Competitive dance as it is truly a “you get what you pay for” program.

Move With Grace guarantees highly trained quality faculty and product.

I would invite you to have a skype with me at some time in the near future to discuss our programs is you think Competitive Dance may be right for your family. Contact me today if you would like to book a time and enjoy this rewarding experience as part of our Team!

[CLICK HERE TO EMAIL ME FOR AN APPOINTMENT](#)