

DANCE[®] magazine

move and b...

THE BEST OF 2019 EDITORS' & READERS' TOP PICKS

BACKSTAGE ENERGY BOOST
THE BEST WAYS TO FUEL ACT II

WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK
CORRECTIONS YOUR TEACHERS ARE TIRED OF MAKING

THE WELLNESS BOOM HOW DANCERS ARE CASHING IN

MISTY COPELAND & KYLE ABRAHAM
INSIDE THE COLLABORATION NO ONE SAW COMING

BAREFOOT ON BROADWAY
THE DOWNTOWN CHOREOGRAPHERS REMAKING MUSICAL THEATER

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

The Royal Ballet Principal **Francesca Hayward** Leaps to the Silver Screen in *Cats*

THE DANCE MAGAZINE AWARDS



Your focus can communicate mood and intention. Here, Tulsa Ballet in Alexander Ekman's *Cacti*.

Put Your Best Face Forward

Develop a more expressive, versatile face

BY GARNET HENDERSON

A dancer's face can be a powerful tool to convey personality, emotion or character, and it's often the first thing noticed by the audience. Yet dancers sometimes forget about it entirely because they are so focused on the rest of the body. Making better use of your face can add nuance to your roles, and help you forge a deeper connection to the audience.

Know Your Motivation

DO acknowledge that different styles call for different approaches. "Limón is very natural. It's all about breath, and having an open face," says Julia Gleich, faculty member at Trinity Laban in London. "Graham is much more about longing and urgency. It's a more narrow focus, like there are laser beams coming out of the eyes." Dancers can practice expressing different movement qualities with the face as well as the body. "A perfect example is something that's strongly percussive, like a tango," says Gleich. "How can you reflect that dramatic,

powerful, explosive quality in the face?"

DO take acting classes. Whether or not you're doing character work, they can help you gain better control over your facial expressions and make choices about what to do with your face.

DON'T let your face be blank, unless it's a choreographic choice. "Sometimes in contemporary dance it looks like the body is moving, but the face doesn't know it," says Gleich. Remember that you are still yourself while in the studio. "You don't have to check your whole life at the door," she says.

DON'T go overboard. For example, while hip hop requires a different type of facial expression than ballet or modern, says Steven Vilsaint, a hip-hop teacher at Accent Dance NYC, it should still be nuanced. Over-the-top faces don't always communicate a feeling or narrative to an audience. "Dance is a language," he says. "Make sure you're telling the story you want to tell."

Try to channel genuine feeling onstage. Here, English National Ballet in Akram Khan's *Giselle*.

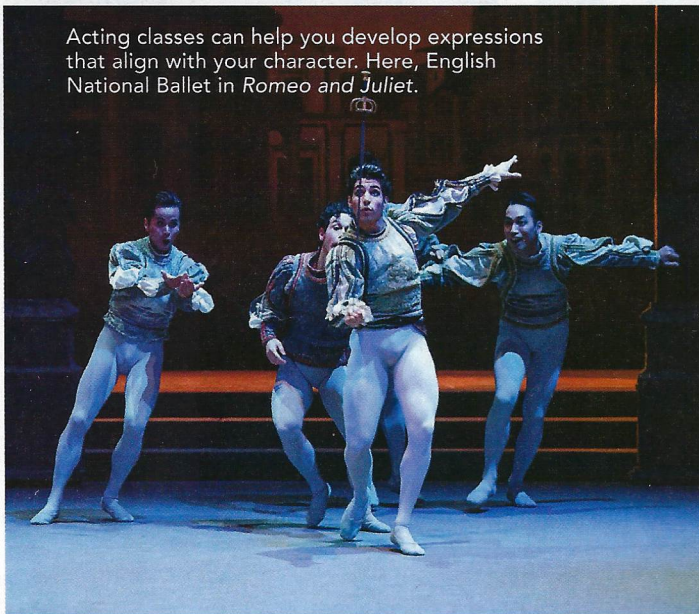
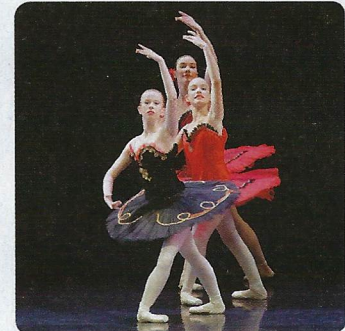
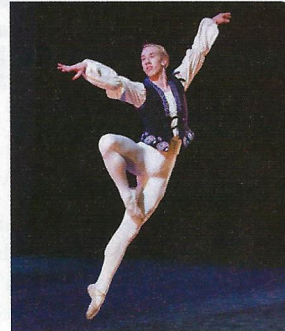
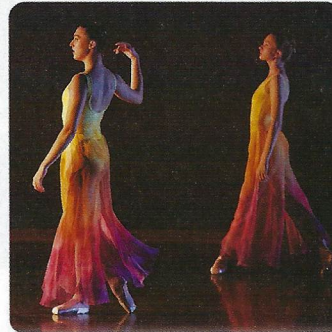
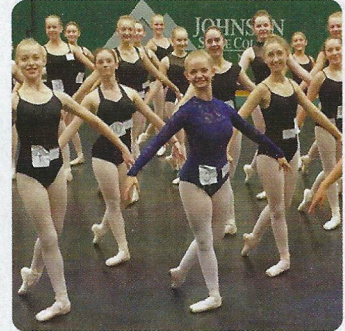
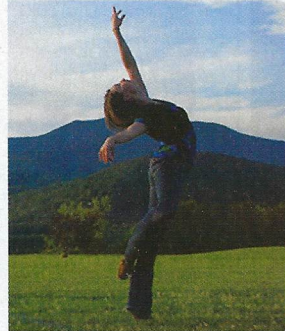


From top: Courtesy Tulsa Ballet; Laurent Liotardo, Courtesy English National Ballet

CHASE YOUR DREAMS SUMMER 2020

Find Your Focus

- DON'T** neglect your eyes. Looking at the floor or the mirror unnecessarily is among the most common mistakes dancers make in class, says Elisa Toro Franky, program director at Accent Dance NYC. Your eyes can communicate mood and intent.
- DO** look where you're going in traveling steps, and practice following your hands with your eyes starting at the beginning of class.
- DO** use the mirror strategically to hone specific facial expressions. "Think about what you want to reflect," says Vilsaint. "What kind of person do you want to bring to the audience? What do you want them to think as they're looking at you?"
- DO** look at your fellow performers. This facilitates more natural and animated facial expressions.



Acting classes can help you develop expressions that align with your character. Here, English National Ballet in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Mind Your Mouth

- DO** relax your lips. "People keep their lips closed, and seal off the energy in the face," says Gleich. "When I try to get them to open their lips, students often start laughing." If you're struggling with this, try talking to your fellow dancers as you move in rehearsal or class—with the permission of the teacher or choreographer. "Having a conversation, even if it's just about breakfast, will help make your face more available," says Gleich.
- DO** use video to spot any habits you might not be aware of, like frowning or making awkward expressions.
- DON'T** plaster a smile on your face. If you are supposed to be expressing joy, channel genuine feeling. "Think of a time in your life that you've felt happy and let your face reflect that," says Franky. ■

Learn from the Best
Perform EVERY Week!

877-BURKLYN | Info@BurklynBallet.com
BURKLYNBALLET.COM