



## Rethinking 21<sup>st</sup> century dance class – Integrating cross training and periodisation

Reina Teh, May 2020

### What is cross training and benefits for dancers

Dance is understood as an art form that requires all aspects of fitness and these include strength, flexibility, agility, endurance and skill. Dancers today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are experiencing an increase in physical demands placed on them, suggesting that dancers need a higher fitness standard, be injury-free and proficient in both aesthetic and technical aspect of the art. Hence, there is an emphasis on the importance for dancers to cross train.

Cross training means to train in another form of sport or another type of exercise regimen in addition to regular dance training. Cross training helps with preventing muscle imbalance, activating less used muscles, enhance agility and prevent injuries which are a part of performance enhancement. Our bodies adapt very quickly to dance trainings however, when trainings are unvaried; it hinders the development of skill acquisition. With application of cross training, it allows an increase of physiological adaptation.

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## The importance of implementing cross training for dancers locally

There are many types of cross training that dancers can engage in, for example pilates, resistance, weights training, high intensity cardio or even plyometrics (jump training).

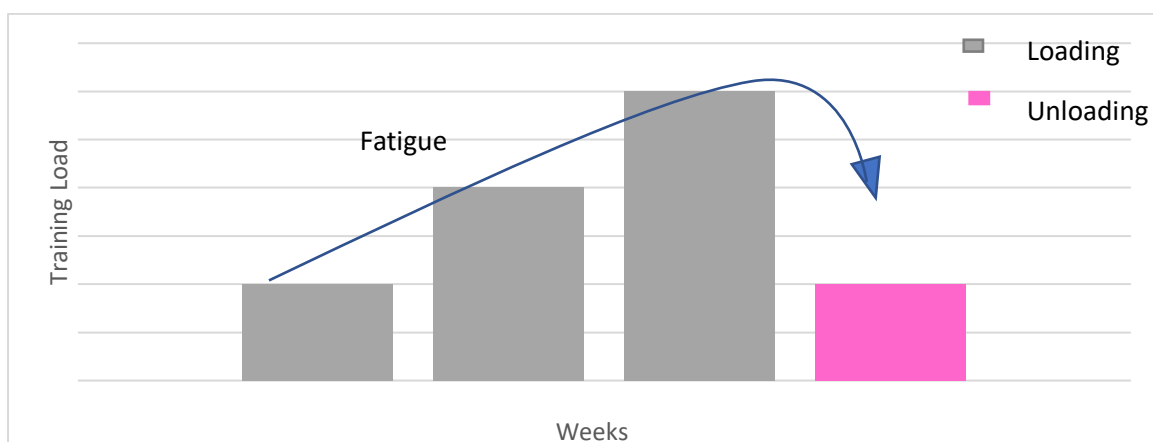
Research<sup>1,5,6,7</sup> have shown that regular dance trainings, when supplemented by cross training outside of dance class, can enhance dancers' performance by increasing strength and reducing the numbers of injuries up to 40 %. In fact, many professional dance companies and schools overseas, such as Central School of Ballet, Bird College, the Australian Ballet School and Birmingham Royal Ballet have implemented conditioning programme and the Dance Aerobic Fitness Test (DAFT) as means of supplementary training and have shown positive results.

DAFT is a testing methodology that examines the dancers' cardiorespiratory fitness. Apart from being a fitness testing methodology, DAFT can be used as a daily means of supplementary training to increase the dancers cardiorespiratory system. By doing so it allows dancers to match up to physiological demands today. Besides constant dance and supplementary training, it is also important to schedule rest within the programme for dancers and this is where periodisation comes into play.

## Implementing periodisation in dance and supplementary cross training

Periodisation is a training methodology that aims to improve an individual as a whole, working towards enhancing performance and skill by increasing challenge and variation. Periodisation is also a flexible training regime that is constantly adjusted to reflect an individual schedule and fitness level.

Figure 1. Step loading



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A classic periodisation within the micro cycle is known as Step Loading (refer to Figure 1), it follows a 3 : 1 loading structure, followed by an unloading phase (*Loading means to increase in training load, number of session or complexity and unloading means the opposite*). The importance of unloading is to allow rest, regeneration and physiological adaptation allowing the dancer to come back stronger. By implementing periodisation into dance and supplementary cross training, it will increase the students' body awareness (*having a better understanding on where they can work on physiologically and biomechanically*), increase challenge thus allowing increase in skill level and physiological adaptation, leading towards performance enhancement in dance training. Click [here](#) to watch a video explaining periodisation in depth by Emile Dumont, an exercise and sports science specialist from The Posture Lab.

## How to implement

To better understand how we can implement periodisation into our daily dance classes and cross training, we are collaborating with Emile Dumont an exercise and sports science professional from The Posture Lab to give you a better understanding through video providing verbal explanation and examples. You can find 2 videos [here](#) for in depth explanation on [periodisation](#) and [strength and conditioning](#) including the exercises that we recommended in the previous article.

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Graduated with an MSc in Dance Science from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, Reina is currently volunteering to write for the programme\*SCAPEdance Science as she hopes to share the knowledge and concept of dance science in Singapore. Reina was also a graduate from LASALLE College of the Arts, Diploma in Dance and has experience in teaching adolescents, youth as well as adult in ballet and creative movement.

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