



UNWEAVE – *Triad* by Cheryl Wee
 *SCAPEdance Residency 2020 - 2021
 Photo credits: Malcolm Fu

Dance Health Screening - What is it and why dancers need it.

Charmaine Tay, October 2021

The need for dance health screening

Dance training entails a combination of athletic and artistic demands, making health and well-being of utmost importance to dancers. Dance health screening has been used as a tool by many dance schools and companies across the world to manage the health, and/or determine injury-risks of the dancers going into intensive training and performances¹.



Dancer performing active hamstring range of motion testing while being measured by a goniometer during dance health screening – Nov 2021

What does a dance health screening consist of?

Dance health screening is a process that uses several clinical tests to obtain information on the dancer's overall postural alignment, joint health, strength, flexibility, balance and stamina. It is also a tool for assessing the reasons behind various injuries in dancers.

The postural assessment allows us to look at the overall alignment and analyse how the muscles and joints are functioning together on a dancer, while looking out for any muscular weakness or structural issues that may hinder training. By looking at joint health and flexibility tells us if the dancer has an appropriate range of



Measuring of plantarflexion during dance health screening - Nov 2021

motion that is well supported by surrounding muscles. This includes (but not limited to) measurements of the ankle joint in plantarflexion (pointing the foot) and dorsiflexion (flexing of the foot/ankle in demi-plie), turn out range (external hip rotation range), and hamstring length. On top of that, hypermobility testing is also used to determine if the excessive joint range that most dancers have is caused by genetics or purely acquired flexibility from training, as this determines injury-risk.



Dancer performing active turn out test during dance health screening - Nov 2021

Measuring balance ability of a dancer provides an insight to the joint proprioception, stability, weight distribution and strength, especially after an injury. Cardiovascular fitness, or stamina as most calls it, can be measured through Dance Aerobic Fitness Test (DAFT)², designed specifically for dancers, to give us an indication of the aerobic fitness of a dancer.

What happens after the screening?

The information obtained from the screening process will then be interpreted and presented to the dancer. This is for them to gain better understanding of their bodies on how it is moving and functioning. Schools and dance companies also use these information to better understand and correctly identify the physical condition of the dancers' body and underlying problems a dancer may have, such as an old injury that has not been fully rehabilitated. From there, recommendations on strength and conditioning exercises will be advised to the dancer, according to the data found in screening.

Why should dancers get screened annually?

Doing annual screenings can help dancers track their progress in these areas as mentioned above, on top of preventing onset of new injuries as repetitive loading from intensive training can cause postural alterations to the body over time. Screening reports can also be used by dancers to obtain base-line measurements of their joint ranges, balance and strength, prior to injury, to aid their rehabilitation process and get them back to where they left off pre-injury.

*SCAPEdance science will be offering dance health screening soon, keep a tab on our [website](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for the latest update!



Jump test in second position during dance health screening - Nov 2021

End.



Currently a dance science and anatomy lecturer at the dance department, as well as a body conditioning, advance ballet and jazz at the musical theatre department of LASALLE College of The Arts. Charmaine also provides private coaching for dancers from the Elite programme for local and international dance competitions. Charmaine is the first Singaporean to graduate with a MSc in Dance Science from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in 2013.

References

1. Armstrong, R. (2019, April 16). *Dance screening practices in dance companies, dance schools and University Dance Programmes: An international survey of current practices*. Edge Hill University. Retrieved October 8, 2021, from <https://research.edgehill.ac.uk/en/publications/dance-screening-practices-in-dance-companies-dance-schools-and-un-2>.
2. Wyon, M., & Redding, E. (n.d.). *Development, Reliability, and Validity of a Multistage Dance Specific Aerobic Fitness Test (DAFT)*. Retrieved October 8, 2021, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/229071256_Development_reliability_and_validity_of_a_multistage_dance_specific_aerobic_fitness_test_DAFT