

Technical Development

Training

If your team has proper basic technique, then challenging them with more advanced skills is essential not only for the learning progression, but will allow for more interesting, intricate and intense performances. Here are great ways to keep technical development a priority of each team member - inside and outside of rehearsal time.

CAMP AND CONVENTIONS

You know the benefits of camp, because you're here at MA! As you know, it's an intensive few days to start your team on the road to developing it's uniform "style". Individuals are challenged to improve here, which only helps the team as a whole. Focused training like this with the entire group is the best way to start off right.

Conventions are a great way to broaden an individual's range of style, movement, and expression. New surroundings, large classes, and new people sharpen learning and listening skills. Much like camp, conventions provide intensive training.

DANCE AND MOVEMENT CLASS

Get your team members thinking about developing their technique when they're not with you. Help them understand that it's their responsibility to make themselves as strong and as technically sound as possible - not just for themselves but for the betterment of the team. Encourage studio classes in styles that best fit the image of your team - modern, jazz, etc. And, of course, ballet technique is the basis for all dance movement.

PERFECTION BEFORE PROGRESSION

When teaching technique, always start with the basics. Arm, hand, leg and foot positions, basic moving steps, proper ways to handle equipment, etc. Once intermediate skills are performed with confidence, introduce advanced skills.

You'll find yourself walking the fine line between challenging your team members to progress technically and pushing them to try something they're not physically ready to handle. Don't stress out your performers (and yourself) by asking more than they're capabilities can deliver. Be realistic with your expectations and keep in mind that some of your team members may never be ready for advanced skills. That's fine. Recognize the variety of skill levels you have on your team and use it to your advantage.

When it comes to performance time, your job as a director is to put on the floor the cleanest, most technically sound routine or show your team is capable of handling. If you only have five team members that consistently hit four point fouette's, highlight those members while the rest of the team is executing some supporting choreography. Take your team as high as they can go with their abilities, then be smart when planning your routines.

SIMON SAYS

This is a great activity when drilling basic technique. It helps with memory as well as exact placement of the movement and it keeps team members interested because it's fun!

1) Teach basic dance and equipment skills - first & second positions, fists, blades, diagonals, L's, chasse's, right and left flats, etc. Review.
2) Start the game. It's very similar to the children's game. The team spreads out across the floor, with one leader facing them, in front. The leader starts calling out skills that the team members must execute correctly and with proper technique, but they may only execute the skill if the leader starts with "Simon Says". For example:

Leader: "Simon says parallel first position".

Team: Everyone executes parallel first. Those who make a mistake, sit down where they are.

Leader: "Second position"

Team: Everyone stays still because the leader didn't say "Simon Says". Whoever moved into second position made a mistake, and sits down.

Add difficulty by speeding up the pace of calling out positions and calling multiple positions. For example: "Simon Says parallel first position, arms in right diagonal, jazz hands to audience." Continue until there is one person left standing. You'll be amazed at how quickly your team members pick up fundamentals.

SKILL OF THE WEEK

Choose a new skill to introduce to your team each week. (Keep in mind these should be skills that your team has not yet learned.) Maybe your team has a solid single pirouette, now it's time to move to a double. Or maybe it's a special performance trick, or method of equipment usage. Spend 15 minutes or so every day on the skill, and watch your team members improve at every rehearsal. With each new week and new skill, don't forget to continue working on what was learned the previous week. At the end of six weeks, your team has added six new weeks to it's repertoire.

