

# Dance Performance Critique

First semester you will be required to attend a professional dance performance. This means any college dance performance from the U of U, BYU, UVU, Weber State, Utah State University, etc. It also means any professional dance company, such as Ballet West, Ririe Woodbury, Repertory Dance Theatre, Odyssey Dance Theatre (these are all in Utah). Second semester you have the option to attend the East Dance Company Concert in March.

All dates of performances on the bulletin board, so there will be no excuses that you didn't know of any to attend. There will be field trip opportunities each semester, in which you can use for this assignment.

If you have any questions, please ask. Almost all performances will have student discounts. If you have any problems about cost or attending a show please talk to me as soon as possible and we can discuss an alternate assignment. Please don't wait until the last minute to talk to me, the sooner the better!

You will need to turn in a **typed** (double spaced, 12 pt font) critique of the concert. Following are some questions you should ask yourself when writing your paper:

- What did you think about the dancers?
- What did you think of the costumes?
- What did you think of the lighting?
- What did you think of the style(s) of dance?
- What emotions did you feel?
- What did you think of the music?
- What did you like most about the performance?
- What did you like the least about the performance?

Make sure you tell me the name of the performance, the company, and the date you attended. **Please attach the ticket or program to your paper for proof of attendance.**

This assignment is worth 100 points. Your paper will be graded on the following:

- Introduction
- identifying information
- thesis statement for paper and each dance
- description
- analysis, interpretation, evaluation
- Flow of paper
- Conclusion
- Proper grammar, spelling, punctuation
- Proper length of paper- At least 1 full page for Social Dance and Dance I, 2 pages for Dance II/III, Dance Co., and EHDK, typed, double spaced, 12 pt font
- Attached program or ticket

**YOUR PAPERS ARE DUE ONE WEEK AFTER THE DATE OF THE PERFORMANCE. FOR EACH DAY YOUR PAPER IS LATE YOU WILL LOSE 5 POINTS.**

**THIS ASSIGNMENT WILL BE GOING ON YOUR 2nd TERM GRADE. PLEASE DON'T PROCRASTINATE. THE LAST DAY I WILL ACCEPT PAPERS WILL BE JANUARY 9th, 2015.**

## Why Do We Write About Dance?

Writing about a dance performance helps clarify your observation and responses to it and calls for both creative and critical thinking. You must be creative with your descriptions, and use critical thinking as you make interpretations about possible meanings for a piece. You also use critical thinking when analyzing various aspects of a dance and when you support your responses with concrete observations.

As you write, you develop your aesthetic taste, or judgment, about what makes a work good. The more work you see and write about, the more sophisticated your judgments become. Writing is an essential part of learning to appreciate dance; it is a way of understanding dance more deeply and fully than is possible by simply observing it.

Writing a dance critique is a process that challenges you to **describe, analyze, interpret, and evaluate** dance in a compelling way.

## Note Taking

During the performance, note taking is strongly recommended—it is difficult to remember much detail without some notes. Take a notebook with you so you can jot down observations during the performance. Write down really specific things, which will help you remember the facts about each dance. Writing in the dark may be difficult, just try your best, as something is better than nothing. You may either write during each dance, though that may distract from the actual piece, or in between pieces.

During intermission or after the performance, you may extend your notes, filling in what was hastily jotted down.

The program, if there is one, serves as a crucial reference point and guide. The program and whatever notes were taken will be your only concrete connection to the performance during the writing process, so it is important to record at least some of the event and impressions it created.

Take notes on specific details including how the dance begins and ends, how it is structured, how many dancers are in it, color and type of costumes, lighting, type of music, and general movement style. It's impossible to record all the movement you see, so select a few specific things from each dance or section, and note the general movement quality of each. To save time, use descriptive words and phrases rather than complete sentences.

## Constructing Your Paper

A critique needs an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction, usually one paragraph, lets the audience know what you are writing about, including the date and place of the performance, the name of the company, and other general information. It also catches the reader's attention with an interesting remark or observation about the experience.

The body is the substance of the paper; it holds your main thoughts about the experience and includes one or two paragraphs about each dance that you have chosen to discuss. The concluding paragraph is your summary, your final observations, and a way of giving closure to your critique. Your conclusion draws together your thoughts on the works that stood out and on the concert as a whole.

## Suggested Format for Critique

This structure is a good way of organizing your critique, but it is not the only way.

### I. Introduction

- a. General information about the performance (who, what where, when)
- b. Interesting statement (thesis) about the performance as a whole

### II. Body

- a. Dance #1, thesis sentence
  - i. Performance detail
  - ii. Performance detail
  - iii. Performance detail
- b. Dance #2, thesis sentence
  - i. Performance detail
  - ii. Performance detail
  - iii. Performance detail
- c. Dance #3, thesis sentence
  - i. Performance detail
  - ii. Performance detail
  - iii. Performance detail

### III. Conclusion

- a. Summary of points
- b. Response to the concert as a whole
- c. New insight

## Thesis Sentence for Paper

The thesis for your critique should appear near the beginning of your paper, most likely in your introduction, and should comment on the concert as a whole rather than focus on one dance. It should provide an interesting insight and refer to the concert as a whole.

Examples of thesis sentences:

- In attending a dance concert at one of the nation's most diverse academic institutions, I certainly expected several dance styles to be showcased. However, my expectations for a variety in the fall dance concert at Brown University were far surpassed.
- Each dance in *Riverdance* was so unique and distinct, and yet the show flowed perfectly and presented the audience with a very pleasurable experience.
- Two choreographers shared this show. Props played an integral role in the meaning and the impact of the pieces of both choreographers.

## Thesis Sentence for Each Dance

In addition to your overall thesis, the discussion of each dance within the concert should include a thesis statement, which is like a topic sentence, but is analytical, interpretive, or evaluative. This statement will usually come at the beginning of the paragraph dealing with the dance in question, and the remainder of that paragraph will relate to that thesis sentence. This will help you avoid making a list of unrelated facts that do little to convey a sense of the dance as a whole. You may use more than one paragraph to discuss a dance, but keep all writing on a specific dance connected to your thesis sentence for that dance. The thesis sentence for each dance should be based on outstanding features of that dance and will necessarily be different for each of the dances in your critique. Once you have found something significant to say about each dance, you will use some combination of description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation to illustrate your point.

Here are two examples of poor thesis sentences for individual dances; neither of them gives any analytic, interpretive, or evaluative information:

- “Yoked” was a quartet choreographed by Karen Swiatocha.
- The second piece, named “Serendipity”, begins with three girls in the middle of the stage.

Here are some examples of good thesis sentences for individual dances:

- In “Dream State”, choreographer Susan Smith examines the subconscious.
- Another dance that had many humorous qualities was “Going Places”.
- “Trio” was performed using large pieces of cloth to create interesting shapes that seemed to have a life of their own.
- “Between Us” was exuberant, fast-paced, and technically demanding.

## Reviewing Checklist for Dance Critiques

Following is a list of questions and considerations that can be used throughout the writing and revision process.

1. Does the critique give general information concert date, place, and who is performing?
2. Are choreographers and composers named for each dance discussed?
3. Does the critique include some description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation, with an emphasis on description?
4. Is there a thesis statement for the paper as a whole?
5. Is there a thesis sentence for each dance discussed?
6. Is there at least one “movement moment” in the paper?
7. Are interpretations and evaluations supported with description?
8. Are personal opinions explained?
9. Are there any errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation? Are there any typing errors? Remember that spell check does not catch all errors (such as *there* instead of *their*).
10. Is punctuation used appropriately? Is there a comma where you would pause in reading aloud?
11. Is there variety in the texture of the sentences (length, complexity, type of punctuation, grammar)?
12. Does the paper flow as a whole? Is it interesting to read?

Below is the rubric that will be used to grade your paper. I suggest you follow the rubric below when writing your paper.

## Rubric for Dance Performance Critique

<b>Expectation</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	
	<b>9-10 points</b>	<b>7-8 points</b>	<b>5-6 points</b>	<b>4 points</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	Gives a framework for critique and an interesting statement about the performance that captures the reader's attention. Includes who and what they saw, and where and when they saw it	Gives a framework and a somewhat interesting statement. Includes who and what they saw, and where and when they saw it	Gives a framework without a statement or vice versa. Includes some info of what they saw.	Lacks a clear beginning altogether.	
<b>Identifying Information</b>	Identifies all choreographers, dance titles, composers, and so on, as necessary for the pieces reviewed; does not over identify by listing every name in the entire program	Identifies most the key people necessary for pieces reviewed.	Identifies some of the key people necessary for piece reviewed.	There is minimal identification.	
<b>Thesis statement for paper and each dance</b>	Provides strong thesis statement for paper as a whole and each dance.	Provides thesis statement for paper and each dance; some are strong.	Lacks thesis statement for paper or some dances, or provides weak ones.	Lacks thesis statement for paper or any dance discussed.	
<b>Description</b>	Gives lively general description and a great deal of vivid description of actual movement moments. Gives good description of lighting, costumes, music, and props.	Gives good general description and some good description of actual movement moments. Gives good description of lighting, costumes, music, and props.	Gives general description and some description of actual movement moments. Give some description of lighting, costumes, music, and props	Gives general description but little or no description of actual movement moments, lights, music, costumes, or props.	

<b>Analysis, interpretation, evaluation</b>	Includes analysis, interpretation, and evaluation; each is well supported by concrete observations of the dance itself; all opinions are supported.	Includes analysis, interpretation, and evaluation; most statements are supported by concrete observations	Includes some of the three; statements are partially supported.	Includes little analysis or interpretation; statement.	
<b>Flow</b>	Maintains excellent flow because the discussion of each dance relates to its thesis sentence; thoughts follow logically; grammar is varied.	Maintains good flow because the discussion of each dance is usually related to its thesis sentence; thoughts usually follow logically; grammar is varied	Maintains some flow; the discussion of each dance is somewhat unfocused; thoughts sometimes follow logically; grammar is somewhat varied.	Lacks flow; the discussion of each dance is unfocused and not logical; grammar is problematic.	
<b>Conclusion</b>	Summarizes the writer's observations in an interesting way; adds something new.	Summarizes the writer's observations and may also add something new.	Partially summarizes the writer's observations.	Lacks clarity	
<b>Grammar, Spelling, punctuation, etc.</b>	0-4 errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.	5-7 errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.	8-10 errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.	More than 10 errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.	
<b>Proper length of paper, double spaced, 12 pt font</b>	Completed the proper length of paper, double spaced, and used 12 point font.	Almost completed the proper length of paper or did not double space or not use 12 point font	Almost completed proper length of paper, did not double space and/or not use 12 pt font	Completed only half of the proper length of paper, did not double space or use 12 pt font.	
<b>Program or ticket attached</b>	Attached ticket or program to paper			Did not turn in ticket or program	
					TOTAL POINTS  /100