



PHYSICAL HEALTH

INTERNATIONAL FACTS ABOUT DANCE

Dance is more than a form of self-expression, more than an art form, or an enjoyable way to exercise. It can also be an alternative form of fighting or a way to tune in and communicate. Here are some interesting facts about dance:

1. International Dance Day brings people together through the common language of dance

International Dance Day is on “29th April, the birthday of Jean-Georges Noverre (1727-1810), creator of modern ballet”. This day intends to “celebrate dance, revel in the universality of this art form, and cross all political, cultural and ethnic barriers”.

2. Breakdancing, born on the streets of the Bronx

“Breakdancing was first created as a ‘less lethal’ form of fighting between warring African-American street gangs in 1970s Bronx area of New York City”, explains Cristobal Gomez in an article for the online educational programs provider Kaplan International Languages Blog.

3. Breakdancers are known as B-boys, B-girls, or simply breakers

Australian artist, dancer, writer and martial arts teacher FraGue Moser-Kindler says in an article for Red Bull (which hosts its own breakdancing competition) that breakdancing is an acrobatic type of dance. “A big part of it is happening on the floor ... the dancers may even spin on their hands, back or heads.”

4. Capoeira: “A Brazilian martial art disguised as a dance”.

This is according to Capoeira Fitness DC, a martial arts school in the District of Columbia. The platform defines Capoeira as a Brazilian martial art that combines dance and acrobatics. The Kaplan blog further adds that Capoeira was created when “African slaves that were brought to Brazil 300-400 years ago were prohibited from practicing martial arts”, and they “developed a mix of dancing and fighting” instead.

5. Tango and empathy

Dancers who are experts in forms that require them to synchronise with each other, like tango and Capoeira, have more kinaesthetic empathy (spontaneous interpersonal movement imitation and synchronisation) than other dancers; according to findings from a study in the *International Journal of Psychology* (IJP).

Could the tango help us tune in to each other?

Maybe, if you’re a tango expert. The IJP study found that kinaesthetic empathy is “correlated with emotional and cognitive empathy”. The University of California, Berkeley’s Greater Good Magazine explains empathy as “the ability to sense other people’s emotions ... and what they might be thinking or feeling. ‘Cognitive empathy’ ... is the ability to identify and understand other people’s emotions.”

Why not try out a dance that sounds appealing? Or if you’re not ready for the stage or the street, have fun (and astonish the cat) by putting on your favourite music and trying out some moves!