

HEADLINERS

Dancin' in the Street

Street Dance has always been popular, but never more so than now. From schoolkids to senior citizens, Sarah Gheotom discovers everyone's going the 'Hyphy' for the 'Crip Walk'.

I recently interviewed Polly Scott, now aged 33, who started street dancing at the age of twelve.

Where did you learn how to street dance?

I learnt when I was out on the street with my brothers and my brothers' friends just out in the local park

Why did you decide to street dance and not another type of dance such as ballet?

Because other types of dance weren't accessible to me. We were quite poor so we couldn't afford to get lessons and this way it was more accessible and it was part of who I was as well it reflected the way I live my life and my culture.

What was it that made you want to street dance?

I saw my brother do a windmill, which is a wicked move, a break dance move and just thought wow I want to do that.

Do you teach street dance?

I do teach it, yes.

Is it your actual occupation or something on the side?

I'm a professional dance artist so I perform, choreograph and I teach.

Why did you choose to teach street dance?

I wanted to put something back in. I want to be able to give people opportunities I never had when I was a kid so making it more accessible to people who are interested in street dance.

How long have you been teaching it for?

I've been teaching street dancing for 10 years now.

How long do you think you'll be teaching it for?

I don't know - maybe in my fifties (laughs). I don't think there's an age limit to teaching because you can teach just by verbalizing it; you don't always have to do it physically.



Do you have your own studio where you teach street dance?

Yes we do but I also teach in different studios. I have my own performing arts school but I also go out as a freelancer.

What's your company called?

It's "Dance Intension" and my other company's called "Xtension"

What ages do you teach?

I teach anything from reception ages, which is about 4 or 5, but I've taught 65-year-olds!

Is it a stressful job?

It's not stressful, but when you teach you give away a bit of your soul and sometimes people don't always appreciate it, or appreciate how much hard work goes into it and sometimes that can get a little bit stressful; it can make you feel a wee bit down, you know.

Do you think there's a wide interest for street dancing?

Most definitely now there is. I think that's also because of the obesity that's around in the UK now; the fact people aren't getting enough exercise, the bad health, the bad eating so the government's now taking notice and paying people like myself and other dance artistes to go out and do our jobs effectively, I suppose, to try and get young people fit and active again. What better way to do this than Street Dancing? Because it's seen to be quite a 'cool' thing to do. Sometimes ballet can be seen as a bit snobby, or contemporary dance is a bit arty, but street dance is quite cool. You've got all the movies like "the Honey" or "Stop the ...", you know. So the boys - and girls - see them and think, "This is majorly cool".

What would you say is the best age to start street dancing?

I'd say 5 upwards.

For someone who hasn't got any natural rhythm, could they still practice enough to become a good street dancer?



Definitely.

If someone wants to become a professional street dancer, what qualities would they need to have in order to reach their goals?

Definitely ambition, discipline and drive as well. I mean, nine times out of 10 you don't get the job you're going for. There's maybe, say, 12,000 street dancers and 100 jobs so unless you're right up there it can be difficult.

What advice would you give to people who want to take it up as a hobby?

Go along to your local gym and try and find out what classes are available to you. If you're at school, speak to your guidance teacher about getting in a freelance dance teacher to teach street dancing as an after school club or something. Be proactive in it - go out and learn and don't just expect it to come to you.



What advice would you give to people who want to take it up as a career?

Once again, go and try to do as much dancing as you can. For example, dance studio times. After that, maybe do 'A' Level Dance or GSCE Dance and then get ready to audition for university.

Thank you very much for your time.

About this article

This interview was conducted by Sarah Gheotom, a member of Headliners' outreach programme Project Subway.

Comments

hi
hi, im chantelle i reely want to start street dancin but i cnt find a good place to go
chantelle (age 13) from hull uk, 18 September 2009 23:37

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