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Composition I
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Are Pointe Shoes the Main Cause of Health Issues in ballet dancers?

An Annotated Bibliography


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Aalten claims that injuries that occur in the professional world of ballet can be both beneficial and harmful to the dancer, as well as, how the mentality of the dancer can cause these injuries and not just the techniques themselves. The associate professor depicts these findings by demonstrating her collective observation and research on the dancers’ injury experiences in multiple documented accounts written by other scholars and professionals in the ballet world.

This particular document elaborates on the subject of ballet injuries and the connection mentally and physically between the injury and the dancer. Before approaching Aalten’s work, I presumed dance related injuries happened because of the dancer’s misunderstanding of the technique, however, according to Professor Aalten the psychological process that dancers endure in the early stages of training are the cause for injuries later and dancers’ “regard pain as a sign of improvement,”(Aalten,2005) and not as a warning sign, in other words, ballet dancers at a young age are influenced by other dancers and/or ballet instructors that being in pain in ballet is a good thing and is encouraged. This information connects with my other sources by reiterating
the idea that the reasons for injury in the ballet profession are due to misunderstanding of body pain limits and not just bad technique and incorrectly fitted pointe shoes.


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This text talks about a questionnaire that was conducted for a group of 110 ballet professional and non-professional dancers to see what was the common injury in the classical ballet world and to compare the musculoskeletal injuries between professional and non-professional dancers to see if there are any significant differences. Costa also talks about prevention programs that should be conducted to help prevent these injuries.

Costa insists that based on the study that both professional and non-professional ballet dancers have or will have a musculoskeletal injury and that the most affected joint is the ankle because of repetitive movements. It adds to my understanding of the topic that out of all of the physical issues ballet dancers receive, whether professional or not, is that foot and ankle injuries are the highest and most common injury. This backs up Wakes’ and Caudwell’s claim that the pointe is causing these ankle and foot issues. Even Dr. Schoene emphasizes in her interview with Russian Pointe Founder, Aleksandra Efimova, that properly fitted pointe shoes are very important because an ill-fitted shoe can cost a dancer’s career in the future.


The video is an interview between Russian Pointe Founder & CEO, Aleksandra Efimova and Dr. Lisa Schoene (Sports Medicine) discussing the importance of having a dancer fitted
properly with a proper pointe shoe. Dr. Lisa Schoene emphasizes the consequences of a non-properly fitted pointe to a dancer.

Dr. Schoene claims that not having a properly fitted pointe shoe can cause injuries later on in the future for the ballet dancer and how important it is for the pointe shoe fitter to understand the dancer’s foot structure and range so a proper shoe can be attained and given to the dancer before injuries occur. This claim adds to my understanding of the topic that pointe shoes can so called make-or-break a dancer in the long run. The video pushes towards the idea that having an incorrect shoe at the beginning of pointe training can cause serious physical conditions later on in the dancer’s career and could make a dancer retire early than if she had the proper shoe to start with. Like Wakes, Schoene would agree pointe shoes is a factor that causes injuries in the ballet realm. In Schoene’s view, Wakes attempts to argue that pointe shoes may need to be redesigned to further prevent ankle and foot related injuries for ballet dancers, are not only incorrect with the point, but also counterproductive. Dr. Schoene would counter Wakes’ claim by insisting that the design of the pointe shoe is not the issue but that little knowledge the pointe shoe fitter and dancer has to correctly fitting and picking the correct shoe.


“Performing Arts Medicine” talks about the health issues, like skeletal complications and psychological issues, that accompany artists such as dancers, singers, and musicians. The article also gives “tips” for medical professionals who are reading this specific text.

The claim this source is portraying is that these three artistic professions result in later health complications and medical professionals today are trying to learn more of the causes of
skeletal injuries of these performers and how to prevent further complications. Some of the information provided on the health results of ballet dancing I knew, however, I did not know before reading this text that some injuries, such as a “stress fracture” cannot be seen on an x-ray or other medical scans which may inhibit the dancer or doctor to see the injury and treat it before the injury worsens. Oswald insists that these artists suffer from psychological and emotional issues which sometimes can be a result of an injury the artist experienced, and these mental issues can cause later health issues like insomnia, tremor, and dry mouth, which at first may seem like a minor issue, however, the level of the issue may rise because performers such as musicians who use their mouth to play the instrument, can’t and it can stop their career because of psychological medications, which started because of the possible injury and/or reason for the mental issues. Like Aalten, Ostwald would agree injuries in the ballet profession are sometimes caused by an unhealthy mentality the dancer has. In Ostwald’s vision, Aalten’s attempt to argue that early ballet training is the culprit in later ballet health issues because it gives the dancer a view of pain as process and not as a signal to stop, are not only unnecessary, but illogical. Ostwald would insist that the repetitive technique in combination with pointe shoes are the main cause of injury in ballet and not just the mentality of the dancer.


This article explains a case study done on nine dancers and the results of that study. Viewpoints of the dancers’ towards pointe shoes are evaluated and recorded, as well as, coping tactics that dancers’ use to “improve” the design of the pointe shoe. The article also states that
pointe shoe companies such as “Gaynor Minden” are constantly trying to improve their shoe design.

This source is claiming that pointe shoes are one of the common factors of ballet related injuries and that the “design of the shoe is causing the dancers to act a certain way” and may not be good for “their bodies and well-being.” It also comments on that there is no relationship between the pain and/or injury the dancer receives and the way the dancer breaks in their shoe, meaning that the dancer will modify the shoe to lessen the stress/pain felt when dancing on pointe. This demonstrates that the design of the shoe may need to be redesigned again. It adds to my understanding of the topic that understanding the movement and the process of doing that movement on pointe is not the only factor a dancer has to worry about but also how the shoe fits properly and if not, what needs to be fixed and/or adjusted. I personally thought the discomfort of the pointe shoe was part of the experience and you didn’t need to change the shoe but adapt to it, and the same thought process is shown by the nine dancers in the case study. This source fits in with the other sources because it hinders at the idea that dancers aren’t understanding their bodies and how knowledge of proper pointe shoe fittings and understanding their bodily limitations can benefit them in the long run, especially with health.