

Topic: The Rainforests

Tribal Dance Tips

Stomping of the Feet

A basic step in African and South American dances is the stomping of the feet. At a very young age, children dance to the beat of the drum and other instruments. Stomping of the feet can come in different forms. For aggressive types of dances, children lift the limbs high up to have a great impact on the ground when they land. The timing of the feet stomping to the beat of the drums is crucial, as some dances require the children to have props like bells, chimes and trinkets. Stomping of the feet goes together with hand and body movements.

Use of Hands

Hand movements are a big factor in tribal dances. Most of the movements done by hand are symbolic for the tribe. Elders teach the children the symbolism of these hand gestures while they are still very young to instil in them the tribe's traditions. Some hand movements for lively dances consist of raising the arms shoulder-level or above the head while maintaining the beat of the drum. For slower dances, the hand movements are slower and more graceful.

Dance Postures

There are three main dance postures in many tribal dances. The first one is the upright stance. This symbolises strength and authority. It is common among war dances or dances involving elders of a tribe. For this stance, the important thing is to have a straight back. The second posture is to have the body facing forward leaning a bit towards the ground. For this posture, the arms gesture toward the ground. The third posture is having the torso of the body almost parallel to the floor. In this stance, the children's body weight concentrates at the centre of the feet to maintain the stance. Dancers use these postures together with hand and feet movements.

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Basic Features of African Dance

- A Flexible spine
- Movement into the floor
- A Low centre of gravity, with many movements performed in plie (bent knees), with flat, bare feet (* this has serious implications for the warm up & cool down as African dance puts a lot of strain on the thigh muscles and back*)
- Isolation of specific body parts, arms, ribs, hips
- Complicated use of rhythm, lower body & upper body often working at different speeds and independent rhythmic patterns
- Use of body percussion (stamps, claps etc)

Specific Dance Steps

1. The Funky Chicken (fast rib isolations forwards & backwards, hands on waist, knees bent) can be performed statically or moving slowly forward
2. The Beyoncé Boogie (Rib isolations with arms bent & palms facing forward, emphasis on spinal flexibility) can be static or moving into/out of a crouched position
3. Jumps/Shuffles forward/backwards in deep plié (could be accompanied by claps, emphasis on keeping the head in the same plane and avoiding bouncing up & down by maintaining a plié position)
4. Ice cream scoops- start with feet apart facing the front, left leg crosses in front of right, weight shifts onto front foot, back to right and then left foot moves back to starting position and you clap.

- the counts are, 1 stamp front foot, 2 stamp back foot , 3 stamp to the side, 4 clap & repeat to other side

- same arm as leg makes a scooping motion in front of body following same counts
5. Furious Feet- in deep plié, with flat feet, maintain position & keep head steady, move feet very quickly to shuffle to change direction