

# Backstage Coach Productions

## Dance Education

BackstageCoach.com

### MUSIC SELECTION FOR DANCERS

by  
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#### Music Selection and Cuts

In addition to listening to the radio and watching music videos, view shows in musical theater and in both mainstream and independent films to gather ideas for performance music. Keep in mind that some dances may have parts where there is no music played or there is a recorded voice playing over the music. Poetry is often recorded in audio by professional actors and can also be performed live by a reader. Consider choreographing the dance first and then layer the music over the movement. If possible the use of live music, even if just a few instruments, awakens the space and fills it with energy. Below are helpful tips on how to choose and edit music.

- ask yourself why this selection would be the best for your performance
- you may really enjoy listening to a song, but it may not be right for you if the tempo is too slow or too fast
- you will be listening to this piece of music over and over so really invest your time in a selection you like
- know your audience; choose music that appeals to the majority of its members or judges if competing
- you may select popular music that is known to the audience like an older classic, yet not overused like a recent top 40's hit
- listen to the lyrics and edit any questionable language
- select music that is age appropriate for the dancer and the audience
- music with contrasting tempo changes is more interesting than a repetitious beat
- clearly define the style of dance to be performed to the music; for example: lyrical, jazz, hip hop, tap, character, etc . . . ; if unsure of what style best reflects the music, then choose a different piece

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- utilize websites that sell music to listen to several versions of the same song; you may discover a more interesting variation of the music
- music websites may also link a title you like to more songs that have a similar style
- a professional recording of your music is crucial for quality sound
- music may need to be cut to fit required time limits; check dance music suppliers for pre-cut selections that may save you time in editing
- avoid slowing down or speeding up the recorded tempo of published music because it sounds unnatural
- a professional has an “ear” for transitions and blending cuts
- when cutting music make sure the beginning and ending notes are clearly heard and not “chopped”
- always cut the music to the desired length before beginning any choreography to avoid frustration in having to change the dance
- several pieces of music may be cut and spliced together in order to incorporate a variety of dance styles into one thematic routine; for example: “*If My Friends Could See Me Now*,” “*Are You Sure You Want to be Famous?*” and “*Baby I’m a Star*” all reflect the concept of fame

Visit the Backstage Dance Library for music resources.

Sawyer, Gina. *Dance Performance Tunes 1: Jazz and Lyrical*. Dallas: Backstage Coach Productions, 2008.

Sawyer, Gina. *Dance Performance Tunes 2: Novelty, Tap, and Musical Theater*. Dallas: Backstage Coach Productions, 2008.

Sawyer, Gina. *The Performance Dictionary*. Dallas: Backstage Coach Productions, 2005.