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# DANCE COMPETITION

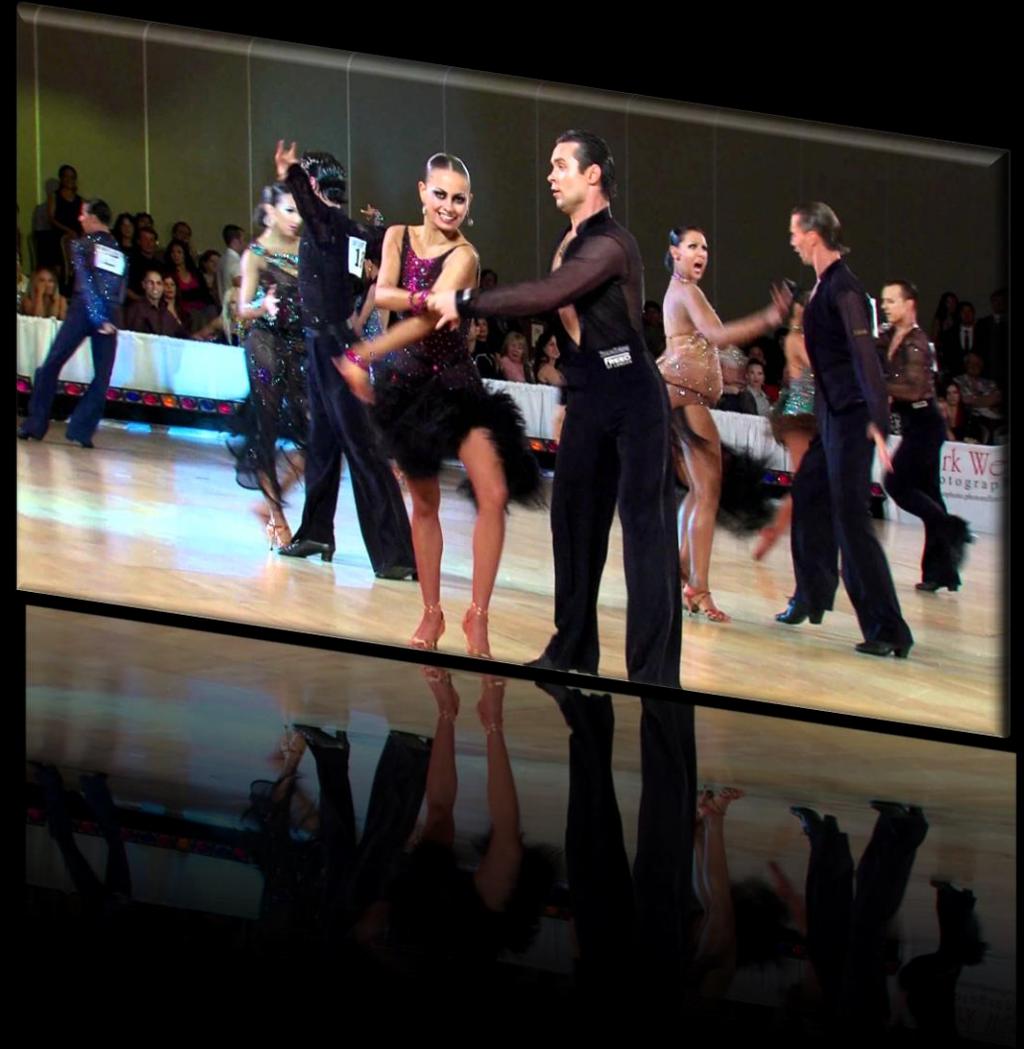
# HACKS

**Dance Competition Manual**

**Marcin Raczynski**  
**Championships Adjudicator and Dancer**

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# Introduction

*Are you new to dance competitions and you're not sure how to get ready like a pro? Or maybe you've been competing for a while, but you'd like to improve your competition preparation routine...*

In this book you will:

- Learn how to plan your solo practice sessions before a competition
- Find out what mobile apps you can use to maximise your practice
- Discover what dance champions eat and drink at practice and on a competition day
- Master 5 essential body language tricks to use at a competition to give you the professional look
- Practice how to reduce your stage fright



1

HOW TO DESIGN  
MY 1-HOUR SOLO  
PRACTICE

*Practicing alone is a very important part of developing as a dancer but sometimes it's just hard. How do you keep your solo practice sweet and short, yet productive and exciting?*

You can do anything you like and repeat it as many times as you like. However, we all know that some may have shorter attention span than others. **It's important to keep full focus when training, then your 1 hour practice may be worth more than 5 hours.**

### **How to do it?**

1. First of all, choose 1 or maximum 2 dances per session
2. Choose 1 subject to focus on during the practice. This could be **timing, footwork, arm styling** or anything else you have been working on recently with your teacher- just keep it clear and stick with it ("doing everything" is not going to be very productive)
3. Pick 2 or 3 sections in your choreography, analyse them and practice them bearing in mind the subject you chose



HOW TO DESIGN  
MY 1-HOUR SOLO  
PRACTICE

## Example: Rumba

### 1. Warm up (7 minutes)

- 2 minutes warming up the hips e.g. cucarachas
- 3 minutes rumba walks
- 2 minutes dance choreography for this dance to music

**Subject:** *timing (to memorize timing in specific sections)*

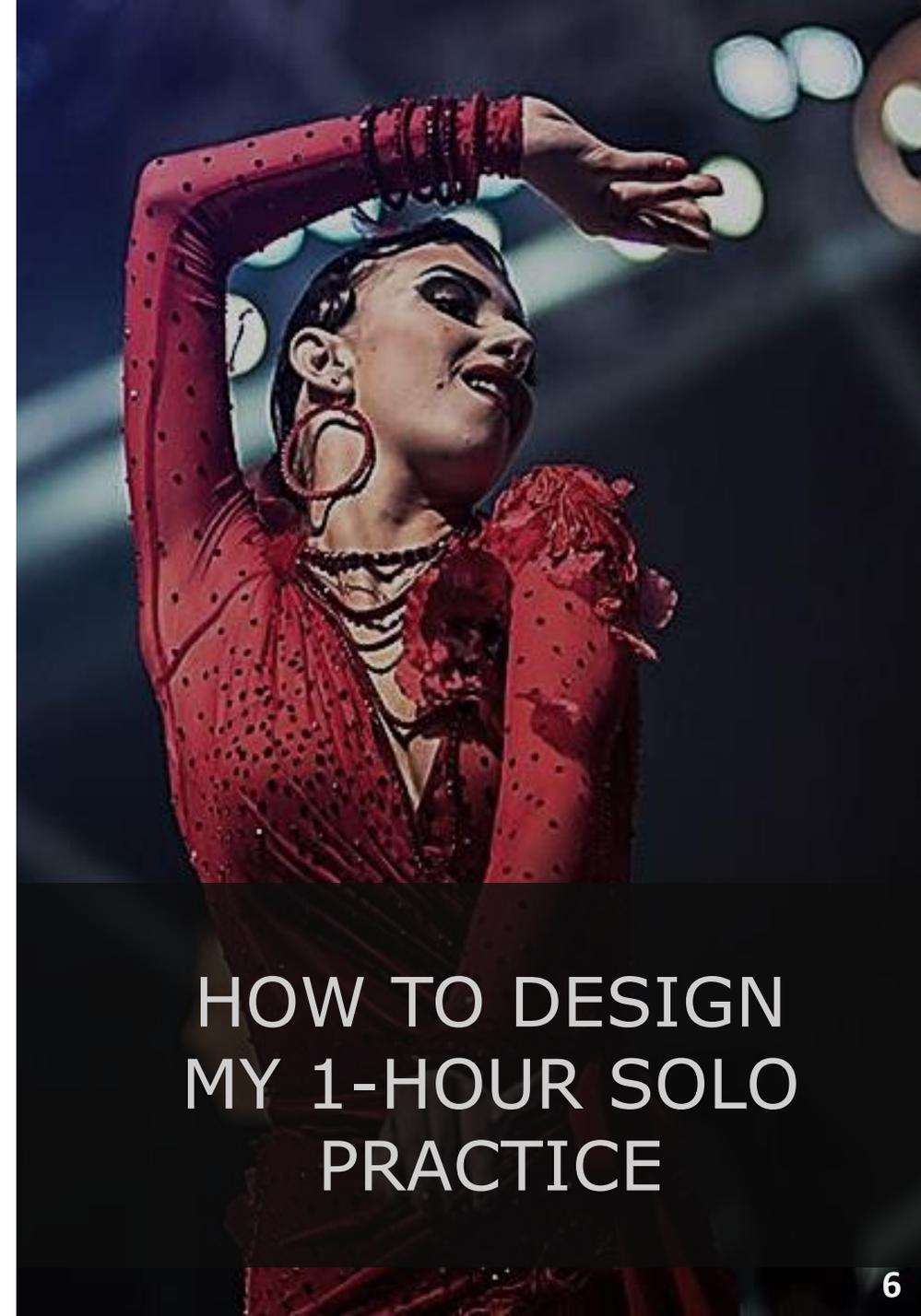
### 2. Section 1-3 (15 minutes each section - total 45 minutes)

- no music, just counting out loud at faster pace 5 minutes
- 80% speed of music and counting out loud 5 minutes
- 100% speed of music 5 minutes

Repeat the above exercises for each section

3. Connect the sections (5 minutes) to make sure there is a fluid transition between them.

4. End the practice with 2 minutes plank to strengthen your core and press ups / pull ups / crunches.



HOW TO DESIGN  
MY 1-HOUR SOLO  
PRACTICE

As you can see there is a pattern to the above exercises. The idea is to keep them interesting and brief so that you always give 100%.

As soon as your mind starts drifting away, it's time to change.

Use a stopwatch to time the minutes and even if you have not completed everything, move on to the next exercise. This way you will stay excited to do it again later.

Spend some time designing your practices. The above example is only a suggestion. Feel free to experiment and implement your own ideas.

**The more time you spend planning your work, the more likely you are to achieve your objectives, stay focused and improve.**



HOW TO DESIGN  
MY 1-HOUR SOLO  
PRACTICE



*"Don't only practice your art, but force your way into its secrets; art deserves that, for it and knowledge can raise man to the Divine."*

*Ludwig van Beethoven*

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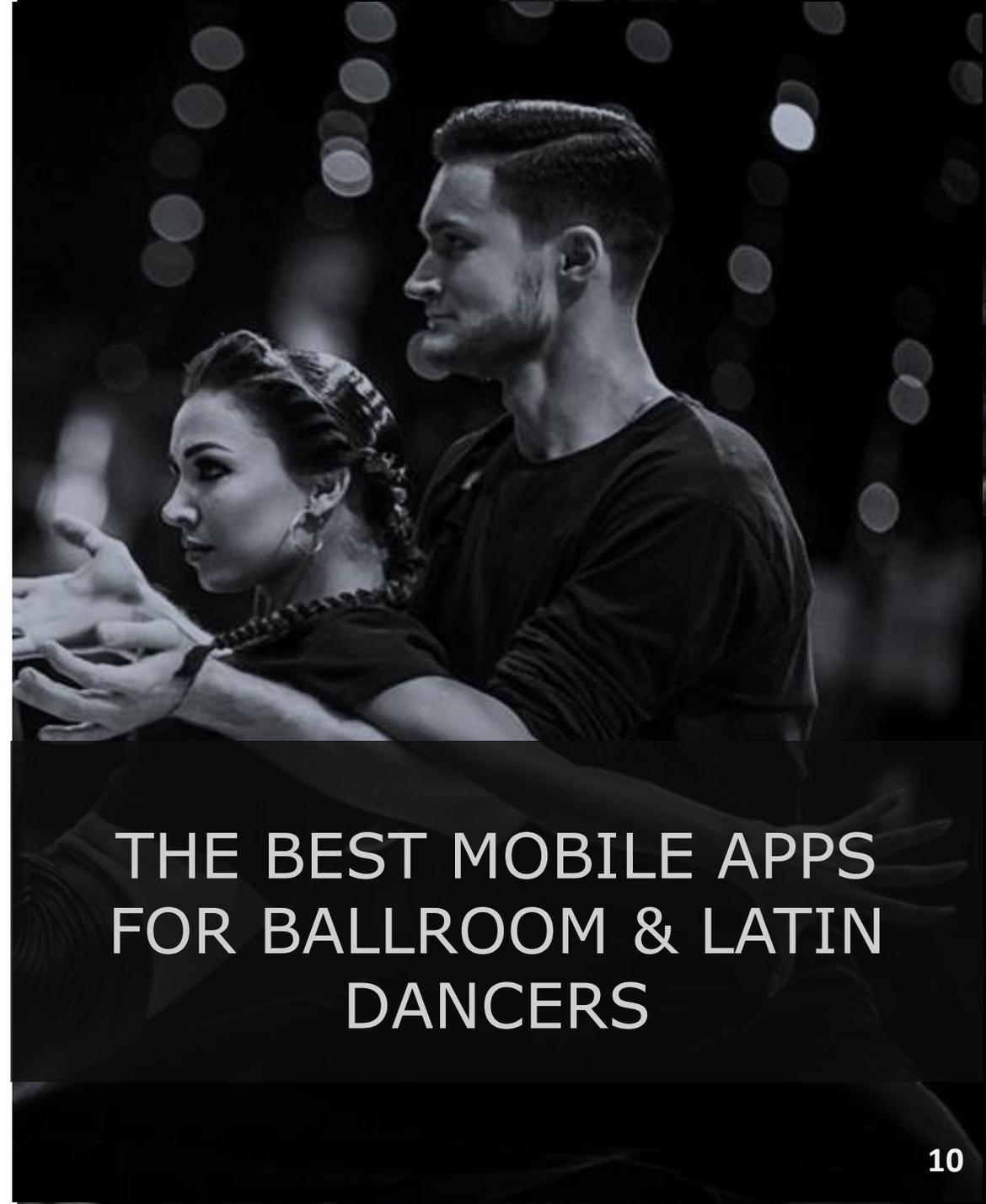
THE BEST MOBILE  
APPS FOR BALLROOM  
AND LATIN DANCERS

*We live in a world that revolves around technology. So why not take advantage of that and use some high-tech mobile apps to simply make us better dancers? Here is a list of the best apps that every ballroom dancer should have at practice:*

### 1. [Anytune](#)

This app allows you to sync your current playlists and modify the tunes. It's free to use and the best features include **speed up and slow down**. You can decide whether you need a slower practice or some high speed stamina session to the songs you love to practice to.

Also, you can delay start (so you don't need to run to the floor immediately after pressing play).



THE BEST MOBILE APPS  
FOR BALLROOM & LATIN  
DANCERS

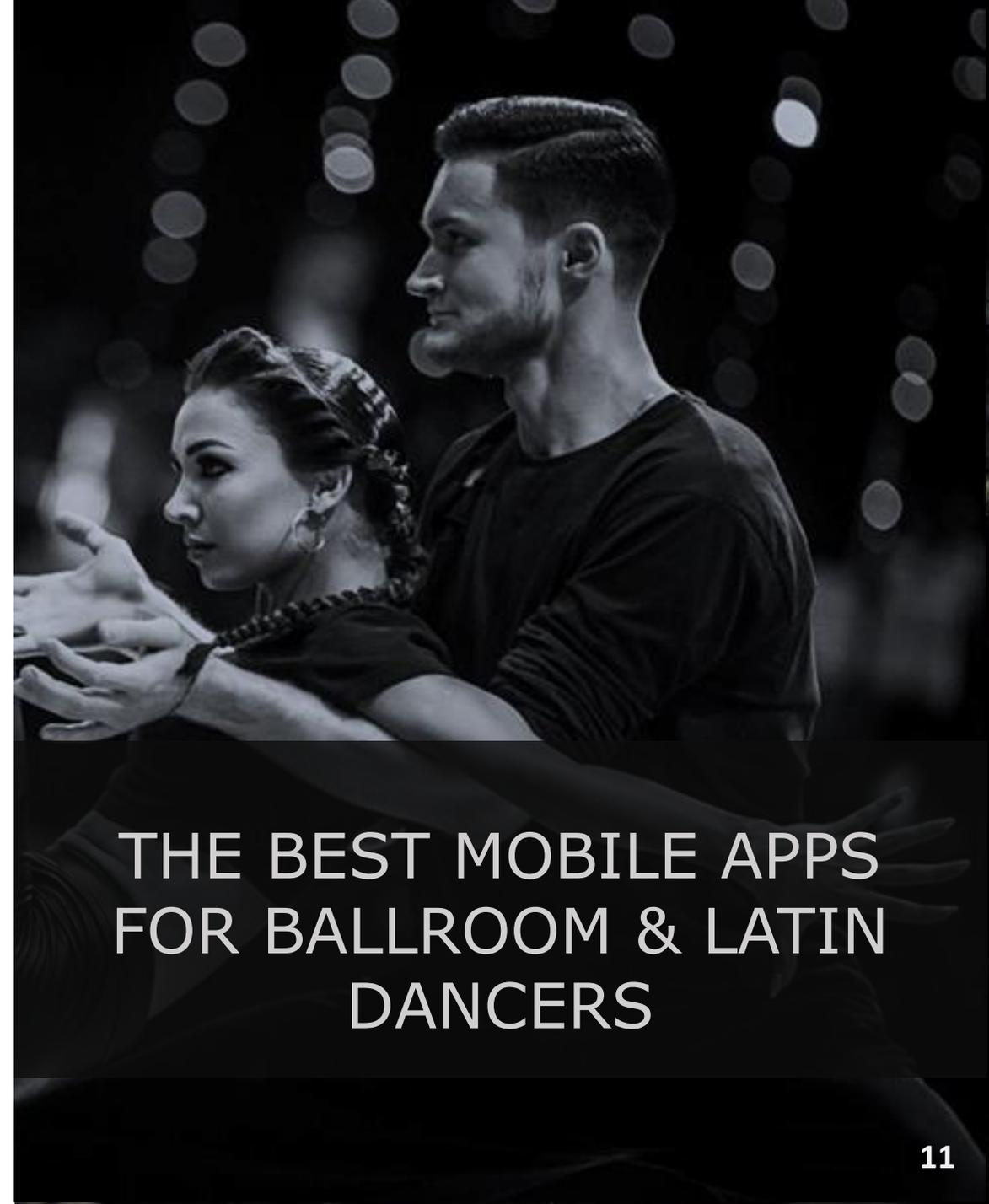
## 2. [Ballroom Competition Trainer](#)

**This is an absolute must-have app for every competitive dancer.**

It features options for Ballroom, Latin, American Smooth and Rhythm.

In a nutshell, this app allows you to create the final practices. You simply link your playlists to each dance, decide how long you want them to be and how much break you get in between. **You can just stay on the dance floor and focus on your dancing, breathing and whatever else you need to without having to choose and play new song each time.**

There are free (Lite) and paid versions available with extra features.



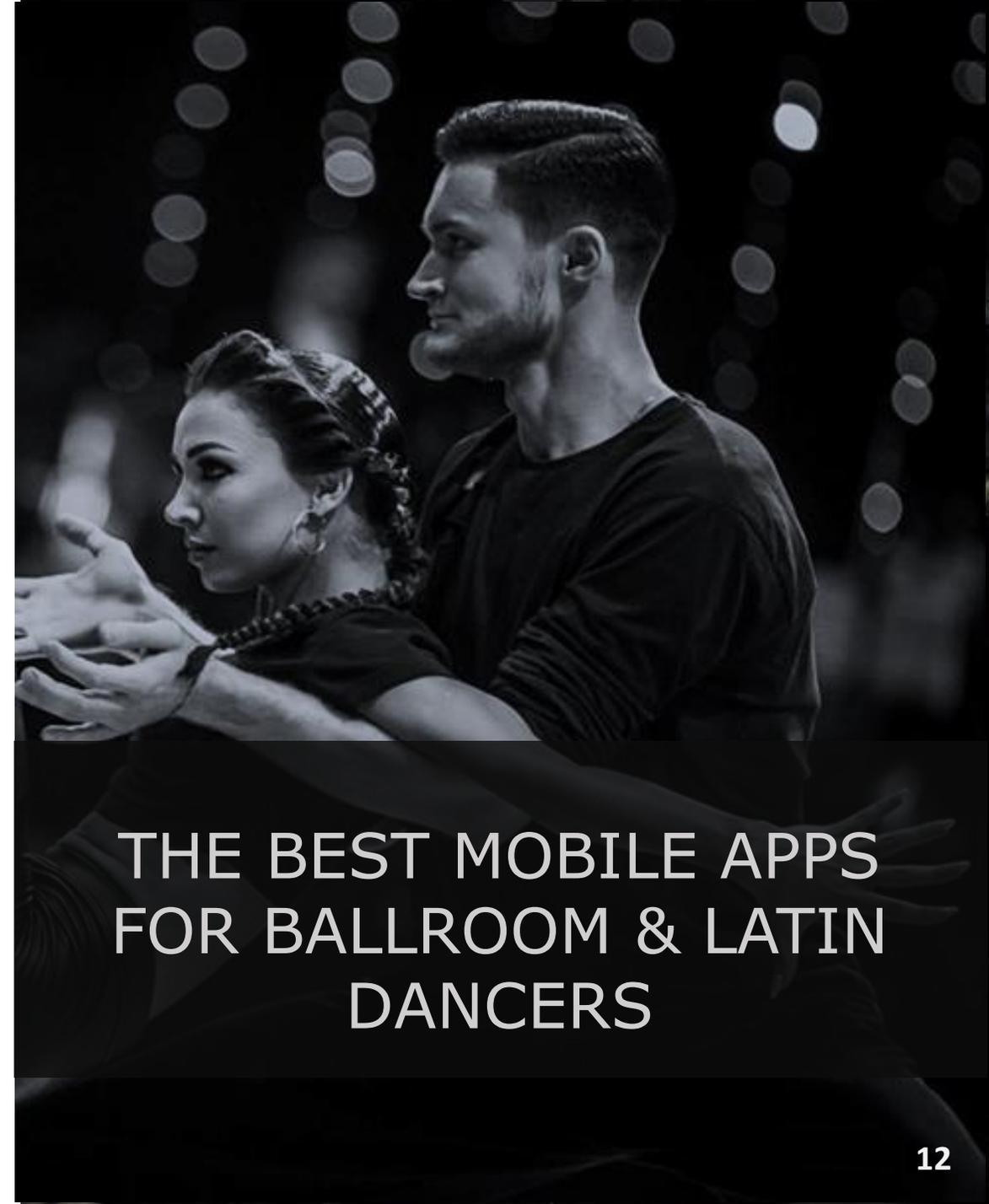
THE BEST MOBILE APPS  
FOR BALLROOM & LATIN  
DANCERS

### 3. [Hudl Technique \(Ubersense\)](#) or [Coach's Eye](#)

These apps are perfect for anyone who loves to analyse each and every step. **If you're a perfectionist and want to make sure the product you deliver i.e. dance is improving then get either of these apps.** They allow you to watch your videos in slow motion and analyse angles, axes and actions. *Are your frame and spine "perfectly" straight?*

*Hudl Technique is free and that version is perfectly sufficient for what a dancer needs. Coach's Eye is a paid app however it has some better quality features. Try each and see which one works better for you.*

As mobile phones and electronics play such an important role in our lives these days we should use it to our advantage. However, **there's currently no app which substitutes hard work and thank God for that!**



THE BEST MOBILE APPS  
FOR BALLROOM & LATIN  
DANCERS



*"Not all problems have a technological answer, but when they do, that is the more lasting solution."*

*Andy Grove*

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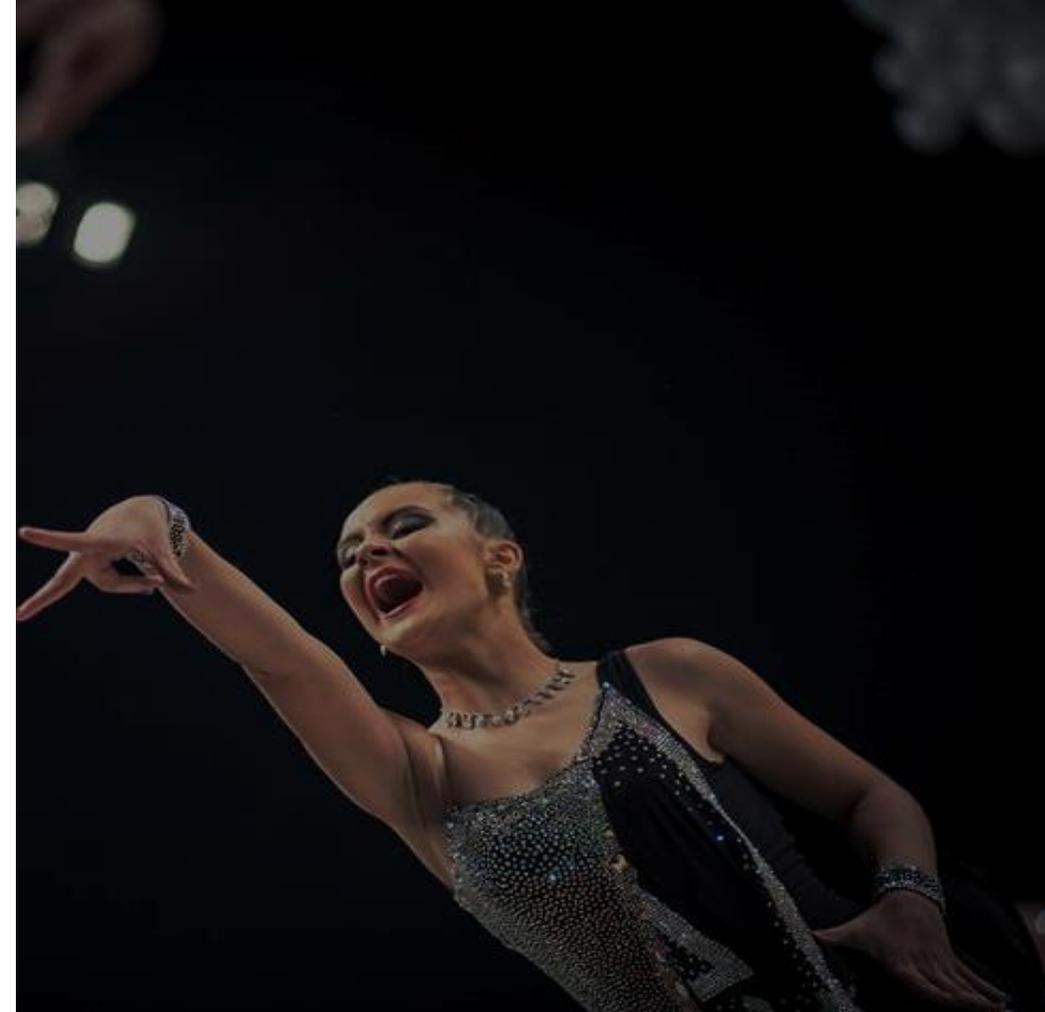
WHAT TO DRINK AT  
PRACTICE OR A  
COMPETITION?

*During dance practices we sweat to regulate the temperature of our bodies. However, sweating causes loss of water and electrolytes which may result in dehydration. We also use up carbohydrates (sugars) to help us move with great energy. This means we need to find ways to replenish water, carbohydrates and electrolytes.*

### **So should You drink water, juice or a sport drink during your dance practice or competition?**

Sports drinks are made up of the following ingredients:

- water
- salt
- other electrolytes
- sugars (glucose and its derivatives)



# WHAT TO DRINK AT PRACTICE OR A COMPETITION?

***What are sugars and salts for in sports drinks?***

They help your body absorb water. Secondly, electrolytes (sodium and potassium) will help retain more water and reduce urine output.

*Drinking just plain water causes bloating which in turn reduces your thirst.*

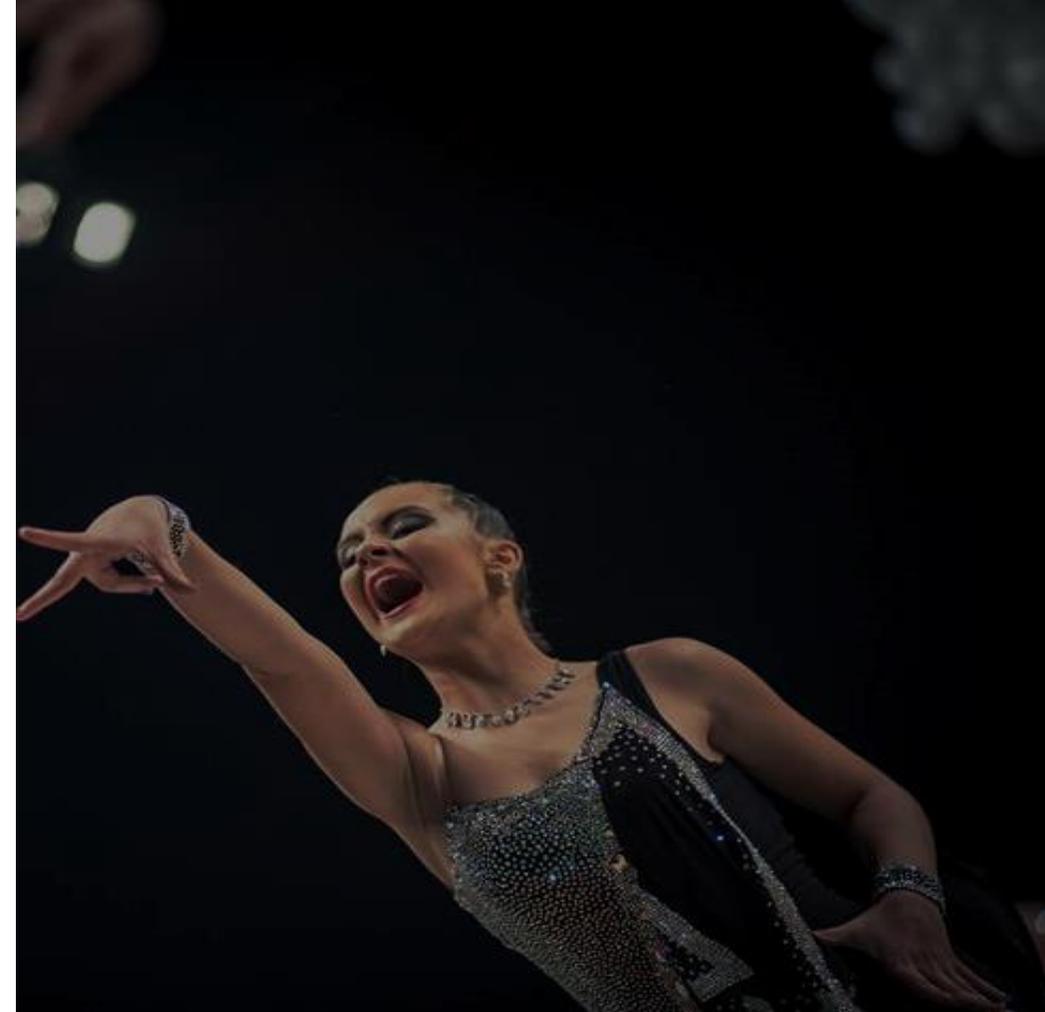
It contains really small amounts of electrolytes (which increases urine output) and no sugars.

***Should you drink fruit juices during practice?***

These may initially seem a good and nutritious choice however they may not be as beneficial. *Juices contain a lot of fruit sugar (fructose) which reduces absorption of water so your body doesn't get hydrated quickly.*

***What if you love fizzy (carbonated) drinks?***

Sadly, they are not as good during your sweaty practice sessions. Fizzy drinks contain caffeine which increases your urine output. *They also cause bloating that stops your thirst (even if your body still needs extra hydration).*



**WHAT TO DRINK AT PRACTICE OR A COMPETITION?**

## ***What's the final choice?***

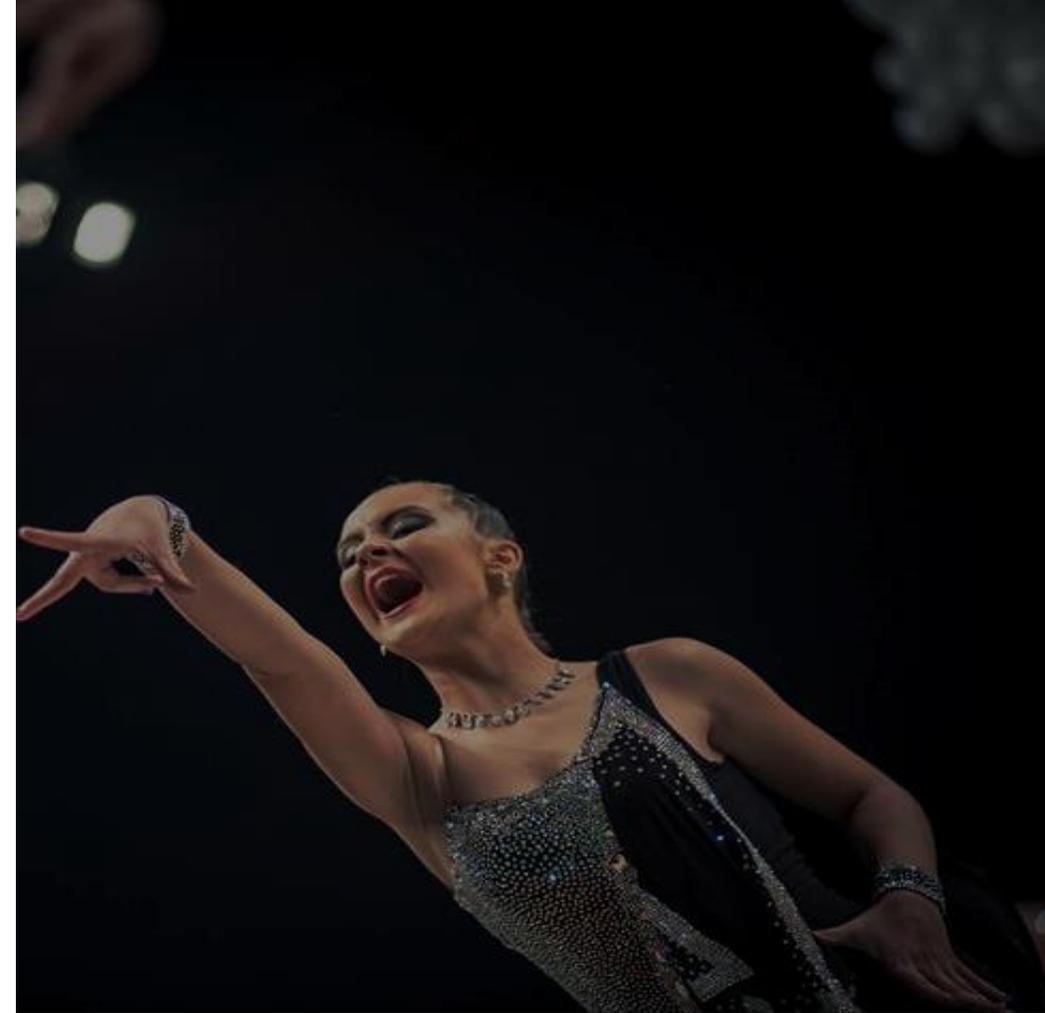
Plain water can help and replace the fluids lost through sweating, however, it will not replenish electrolytes or carbohydrates. It will also give you a feeling of fullness and increase urine output. Perhaps not the most desirable on a competition day.

*Sports drinks are not shown to hydrate your body better than water, however they help to replace carbohydrates and electrolytes. This in turn can boost your energy levels and keep you going for a few more dances without feeling bloated.*

**Lucozade sport is most often used because it tastes great and does what it says on the label.**

It is best to use sports drinks during or after high intensity dance training or dance events.

However, water may be a better option for those who are not involved in high-intensity dance sessions (e.g. social dancing, slow practices).



**WHAT TO DRINK AT  
PRACTICE OR A  
COMPETITION?**



*"Your body is a temple but only  
if you treat it as one."*

*Astrid Alauda*

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COMPETITION FOOD  
OF DANCE CHAMPIONS

*What should you eat on a competition day? There are hundreds of articles on what's healthy for you, but let's see how some of the best Latin dancers in the World fuel their bodies.*

**There is a general misconception about the food we should eat on a day of a competition.** It seems everyone watched the movie [Ballroom Dancer](#) and now many dancers just eat plain rice.

Have a look at the competition food habits of our idols: Dekatra Lapaeva, Maurizio Vescovo and Sergey Surkov.



COMPETITION FOOD  
OF  
DANCE CHAMPIONS

**Dekatra Lapaeva** - "I have never paid so much attention to food, to be honest. To me sleep was making big difference to my performance. Depending on the competition, whether it's late in the day or lasting many hours, I would usually miss breakfast and have light lunch instead. I would normally eat a small salad, bowl of muesli, eggs or sometimes pasta.

During the competition I didn't eat much, very often nothing. If I needed some energy I would have a banana or a small piece of chocolate and glucose-based drinks with electrolytes (e.g. Lucozade Sport) and vitamins (not Red bull). "

**Maurizio Vescovo**- "My opinion is that a healthy breakfast is important. However, it should be what you always eat so I wouldn't change my diet just for the competition. This way my body was used to the fuel I put in. My usual breakfast at competitions would consist of: eggs, brown bread, something sweet or croissant, coffee and an orange."



### COMPETITION FOOD OF DANCE CHAMPIONS



**Sergey Surkov**- "I think the diet is very personal and it depends on the length of the competition. Normally I would eat carbs for breakfast and something very easy to digest through the comp... It also depends on country, place and what is available... I always had with me health bar or a protein bar... But most importantly you have to be good with your diet prior to the competition. That's the most important thing..."

\*\*\*\*

You can see that what these champions eat is individual. Some may choose to eat very little on a competition day, others would require a more substantial meal. However, **the common idea mentioned by all is that their dietary habits didn't change just for a competition.**

*Listen to your body and don't try to put it in shock on a competition day by a sudden start of your healthy vegetable-only diet.*



COMPETITION FOOD  
OF  
DANCE CHAMPIONS



*"Your diet is a bank account.  
Good food choices are good  
investments."* Bethenny Frankel

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SHOULD I PUT  
CRYSTALS ON MY  
DANCE SHOES OR NOT?

We all love sparkly things and vivid colours especially when it comes to dancing. *BUT is it wise to have colourful shoes covered in crystals?*

Imagine that you go to a shop and you need a new pair of dance shoes. Maybe you have never owned a pair before or you simply want to add a 10th one to your collection. However, it may be quite boring to buy the same shoe again so why not spice it up a bit and go for black colour or red and then add some sparkles to it... *What do you think?*

Whether you are a beginner dancer or a professional, **the shoes you wear will have an impact on your look as a performer**, and that's inevitable. But before you decide to go wild with embellishments on your shoes, think about the following **4 points**.

NB. "coloured shoes" means other than tan e.g. **red, black, gold, etc.**



SHOULD I PUT CRYSTALS  
ON MY DANCE SHOES  
OR NOT?

## 1. Everyone- look at my feet

If you decide to put decorations somewhere, people will look that way. You have red shoes or vivid crystals over them, they will attract attention. This could be a problem. Shoes on their own may look beautiful but ***is your footwork beautiful enough to be highlighted by the decorations or a different shoe colour?***

*If footwork is not your strongest asset, do you really want everyone to look at your feet?*

This point may be particularly important for any dancer who doesn't have very much experience and strength in their feet.

## 2. "Diamonds are forever"

Well, no they are not. Unfortunately, the crystals on your shoes may not be as durable as you would expect. Some of them will fall off, some will be scratched and some will lose the sparkle. Suddenly, your shoes will not seem as exciting and amazing as they were when you bought them...

**Shoes are dancer's very important tool so you always want to be sure their quality is perfect.**

Perhaps you may not want to be fixing your shoes after each competition and keep re-gluing the crystals, or *do you?*



SHOULD I PUT CRYSTALS  
ON MY DANCE SHOES  
OR NOT?

### 3. Red with pink or blue with green?

Once you decide to have coloured shoes, you need to remember that they may not necessarily go well with all your dresses. On the other hand, this could be a good excuse to buy a new pair of shoes to colour-coordinate with each dress... and *who doesn't like that?*

### 4. Money, Money, Money

Dancing is already so expensive and dancers spend more and more on their looks. Of course, when you have shoes covered in crystals, the hard work of gluing them on is not cheap. Not only are the crystals themselves quite costly, but also asking for a clever design and execution is not free.

**What would you say to saving the money on the embellishments and instead, putting it towards another pair of tanned shoes or a dance lesson on footwork?**



**SHOULD I PUT CRYSTALS  
ON MY DANCE SHOES  
OR NOT?**

When you watch closely, most of the top professionals wear simple tan shoes. As a beginner dancer, you probably want to stay away from coloured shoes with excessive decorations.

Next time you buy new shoes, ask yourself this question before:

*Do I want my feet and how I use them to be the highlight and main focus of my dancing...?*



SHOULD I PUT CRYSTALS  
ON MY DANCE SHOES  
OR NOT?

*"A shoe is not only a design, but it's a part of your body language, the way you walk. The way you're going to move is dictated by your shoes."*

*Christian Louboutin*

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5 BODY LANGUAGE  
TRICKS TO KICK START  
YOUR COMPETITION

*You stand in front of an audience, a panel of adjudicators hoping they will notice how confident and professional you are. Here is a list of the most important body language tips for your dance competition or a show.*

## **1. All about that... Face**

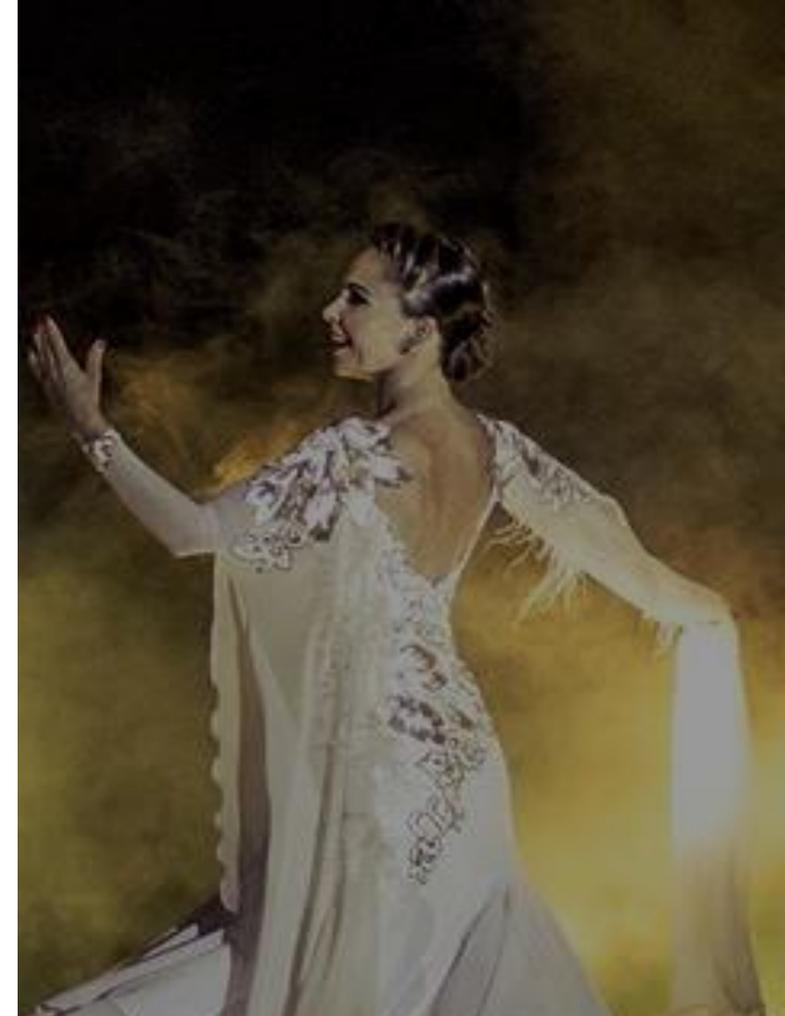
As a dancer you spend a lot of time working on your body and movement but sometimes you may forget about the face. Ultimately, *face attracts people's attention first*. That's why you should make sure that you practice facial expressions too.

### **How?**

Have a genuine smile. People love positive energy and everyone is drawn to this. Look around and the thought that you can perform and dance should already put a huge smile on your face. Fake smiles are easy to spot.

**NEVER** show sadness, anger or contempt. Only use negative emotions during your performance, if needed.

**Identify 5 facial expressions and practice them in front of a mirror e.g. happy face, excited face, cheeky face, sad face, angry face.**



**5 BODY LANGUAGE  
TRICKS TO KICK  
START YOUR  
COMPETITION**

## 2. The power stand

Once you have found your spot on a dance floor, you need to stand. It seems quite a hard task for many to stay still, be comfortable and confident. ***Stand straight, head up, shoulders down with toning in your arms. Knees relaxed.*** Practice your power stand in front of a mirror.

N.B. Don't forget about the face

## 3. Laser eyes

Very often our eyes may wonder around when dancing. This makes dancers look uncomfortable and unsure of themselves. *Use direct gazing to your advantage.* When you come onto a dance floor, have a clear point to look at i.e. your partner, someone in the audience.

You must have heard it a million times so once again:  
**NEVER** look at the floor.



5 BODY LANGUAGE  
TRICKS TO KICK  
START YOUR  
COMPETITION

## 4. Confidence builder

*To make an audience believe in the story you are creating, you need to believe in it first. If you doubt your dancing, everyone else will do too.*

There are different ways for dancers to get their confidence boost and these are:

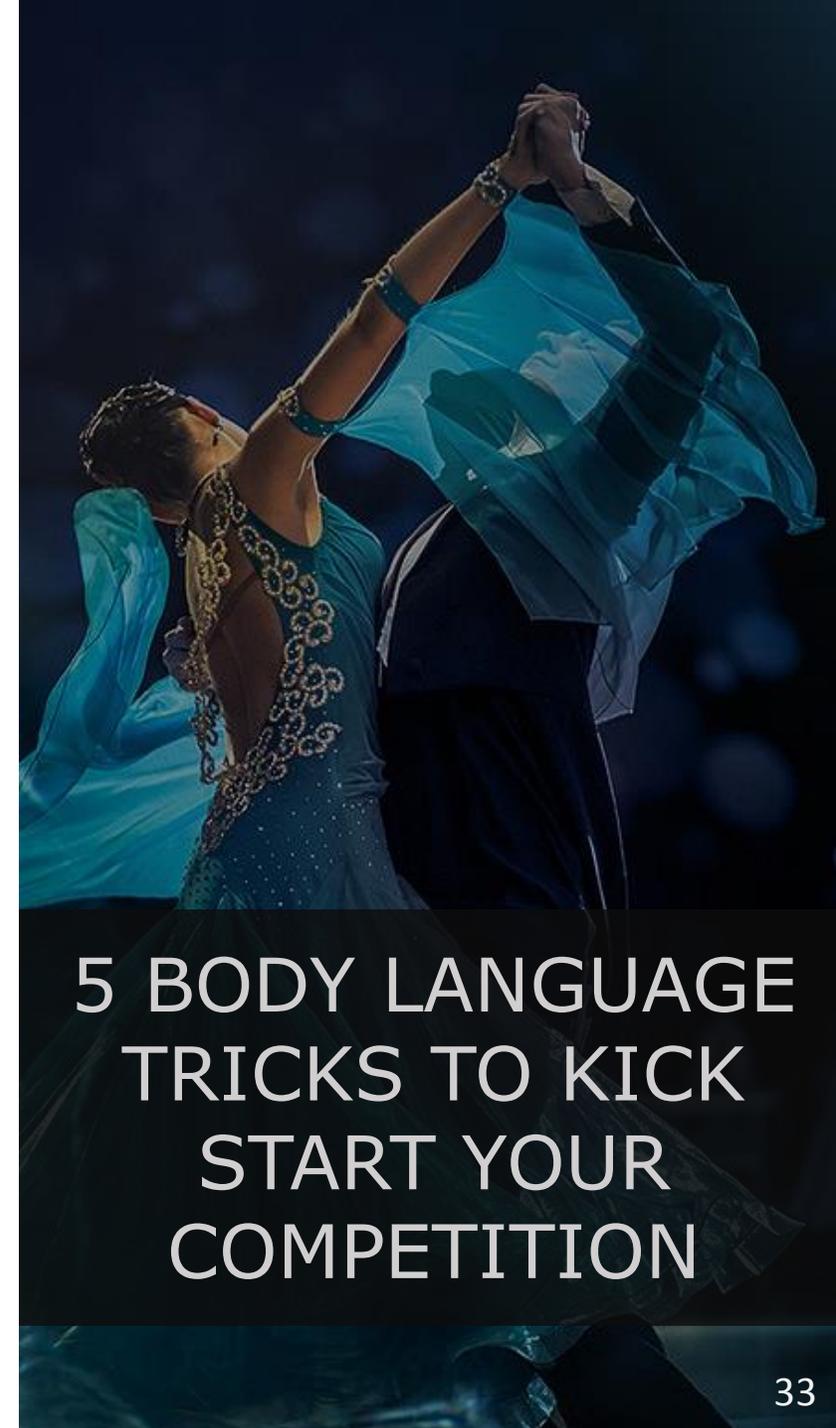
- listen to music that gets you pumped and ready
- watch an inspirational YouTube video
- Message your best friend for a few words of encouragement
- Hear from your dance partner that you are and look amazing

## 5. Finishing

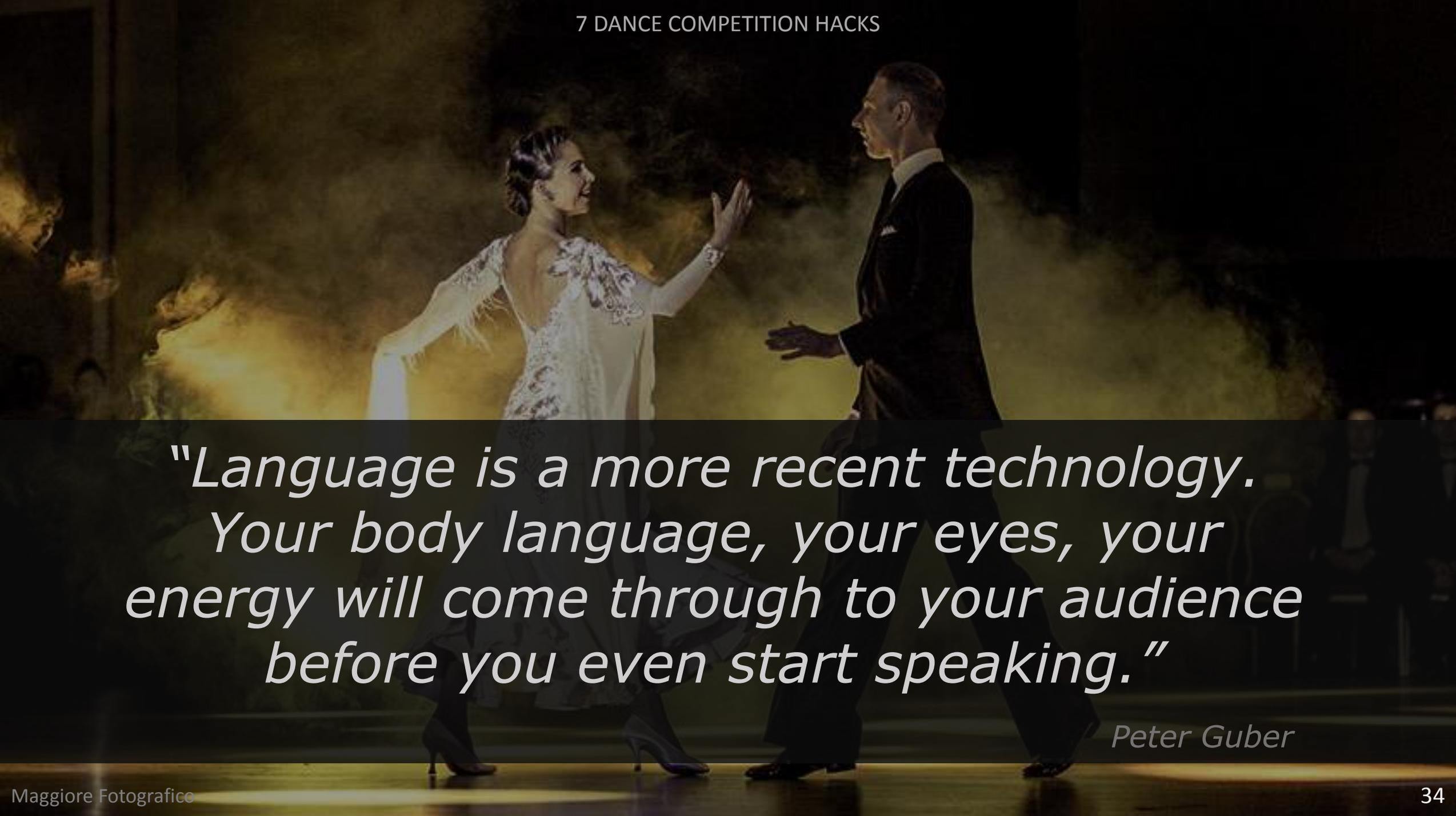
Walking off the floor is still part of your performance. Make sure that you practice with your partner how you finish your dance i.e. turns into curtsy, walk on left or right etc.

***Remember to keep smiling when you come off the floor as if that had been the best performance of your life***

(even though you may think it was a total disaster).



**5 BODY LANGUAGE  
TRICKS TO KICK  
START YOUR  
COMPETITION**



*"Language is a more recent technology.  
Your body language, your eyes, your  
energy will come through to your audience  
before you even start speaking."*

*Peter Guber*

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5 STEPS TO OVERCOME  
STAGE FRIGHT  
IN DANCING



## 5 STEPS TO OVERCOME STAGE FRIGHT IN DANCING

*10 minutes before getting on the dance floor to compete or do a show. Your muscles are tensing and you start shaking. Your stomach feels twisted and on top of that you can't remember your choreography. This is what every dancer goes through.*

The key is to learn how to deal with it. Here are **5 ways to help you overcome stage fright before your performance.**

## 1. Warm up before getting on the floor

All athletes warm up before their competitions, so should you as a dancer. The idea of a warm up is to wake up your brain and body to get them into "performance mode". Walking around will definitely not help your locksteps or a frame.

**Get hot, get sweaty and then get ready for the competition.**

## 2. Plan your whole day of competition

*The more time you spend on planning, the less stressed you'll be on the day.* Estimate how long everything will take you- from getting to the venue, warming up, finishing make-up and hair, having a coffee etc. Develop a routine and **make sure that you're ready to "perform" 30 minutes before your show.**

**If you're too early, you will lose focus, if you're too late, you will stress out.**



**5 STEPS TO OVERCOME  
STAGE FRIGHT  
IN DANCING**

### 3. The power of pep talk

You're about to go on stage and these thoughts go through your head:

- everyone is better than me
- people will judge me that I'm an awful dancer
- I can't remember my choreography

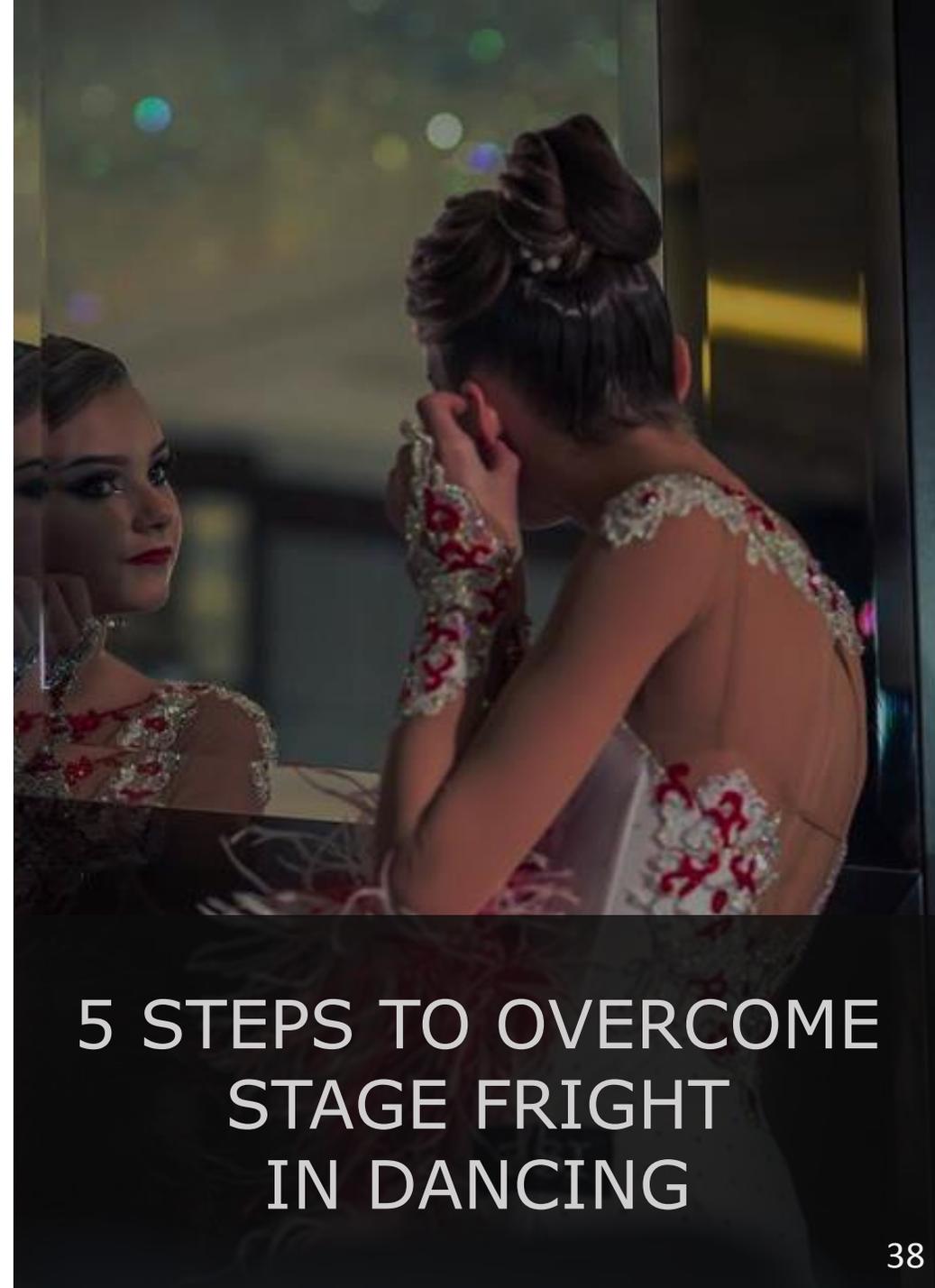
*We're all so good at telling ourselves how rubbish we are.  
Well, STOP it and do it NOW!*

Before you start to perform, say these to yourself:

*I'm the best dancer out there.  
I look amazing and I dance even better.  
I am going to show everyone how dancing is done.  
Everyone will love me.*

It's not about getting big headed, but simply building your self-esteem.

**Remember, it takes time to start believing in yourself so practice it.**



**5 STEPS TO OVERCOME  
STAGE FRIGHT  
IN DANCING**

#### 4. Practice how to handle mistakes

Everyone can make mistakes on a dance floor. The best performers know how to deal with them. For many dancers, messing up a piece in a choreography seems the end of the world and that's the problem. We don't realize the insignificance of the mistake in the full picture. Most often, **no one even notices the mistake except you.**

**Instead of beating yourself up in your head for the rest of your choreography, say to yourself-  
*It's ok, I'm great!***

Then simply get on with your dancing. If you don't focus on your mistakes, the audience or judges won't either.

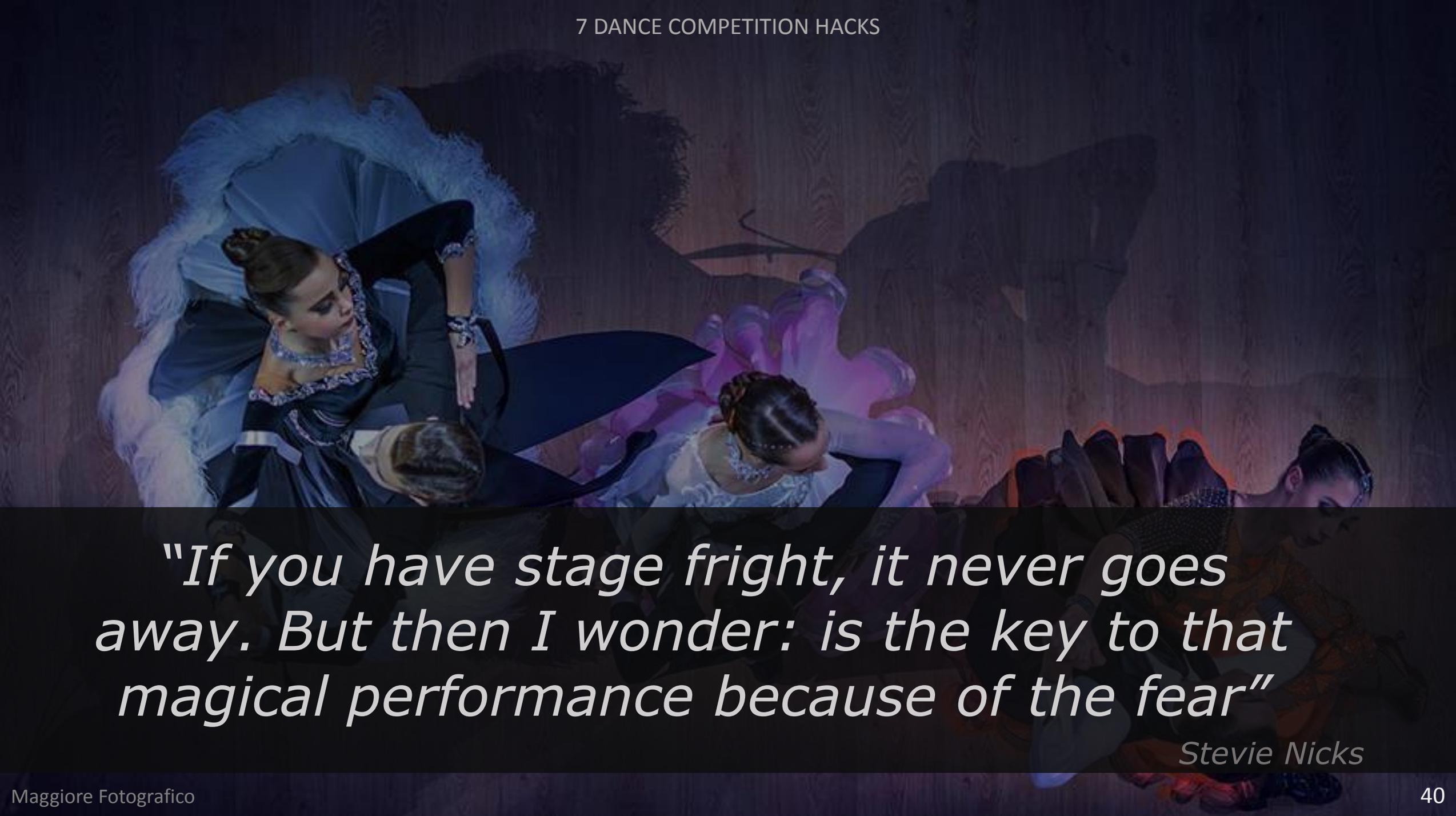
#### 5. Keep doing it over and over again

Performing and dancing in front of others may be so nerve-racking. However, *if you keep repeating what you fear the most, your brain will adapt to it.*

That's why doing the same bungee jump repeatedly will not be as exciting as it was the first time round. Over time, you will get more confident and start enjoying to perform.



**5 STEPS TO OVERCOME  
STAGE FRIGHT  
IN DANCING**

A high-angle photograph of three dancers in elaborate, dark costumes with large, ruffled skirts. The dancer on the left is in a black dress with a large white ruffle and a blue sash. The dancer in the center is in a black dress with a large white ruffle and a blue sash. The dancer on the right is in a black dress with a large white ruffle and a blue sash. They are performing on a wooden stage with a dark background.

*"If you have stage fright, it never goes away. But then I wonder: is the key to that magical performance because of the fear"*

*Stevie Nicks*

# 7 DANCE COMPETITION HACKS

*"Work hard and never make excuses." – Lin Dan*

## BEFORE COMPETITION

### 1. HOW TO DESIGN MY 1-HOUR SOLO PRACTICE

Always plan and write your practices in advance

### 2. THE BEST MOBILE APPS FOR BALLROOM AND LATIN DANCERS

Anytune, Ballroom Dancers Trainer, Hudl Technique (Ubersense)

### 3. WHAT TO DRINK AT PRACTICE OR AT A COMPETITION

Water at slow practices and sport drinks when sweating a lot

### 4. COMPETITION FOOD OF DANCE CHAMPIONS

The key is not to change your diet just before a competition

### 5. SHOULD I PUT CRYSTALS ON MY DANCE SHOES OR NOT?

Preferably not unless you're very confident with your footwork

## ON COMPETITION DAY

### 6. 5 BODY LANGUAGE TRICKS TO KICK START YOUR DANCE COMPETITION

Face, Power Stand, Laser eyes, Build your confidence, Practice your end of dance

### 7. 5 STEPS TO OVERCOME STAGE FRIGHT IN DANCING

Warm up well, Plan well ahead, Pep Talk Friends, Practice making mistakes, Keep going no matter what

## *Marcin Raczynski*

*Professional dancer  
Principal Teacher / Dance school co-owner at  
[Princeps Dance Academy](#) and  
Championships Adjudicator.*

Every dancer wants to get an edge over their competitors and find out what they can do extra to make their dancing much better.

What began as simple advice giving and planning for his students, turned into regular blogging and sharing the knowledge with dancers across the globe.

Marcin dances and works with others, with a simple goal to make everyone better than they were yesterday...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

# FINAL WORD FROM ME

## Keep going

I am learning everyday about Ballroom and Latin dancing from my students, colleagues and teachers. Becoming an expert is a very long process so brace yourself and just stick with it. With the right attitude and good work, you can become the dancer you always wanted to be, faster than you think.

## Special Thanks To:

Maggiore Fotografico for sharing his outstanding photographs of dancers. His work drew my attention from the very beginning because they combine dancing with a photographic artistry creating simply unique pieces!

Follow him on [Facebook](#) and visit [magfoto website](#).

Thank you!

I'm hoping you enjoyed reading this e-book as much as I enjoyed putting it together for you. I will keep improving it over time.

I really appreciate your time taken to download and read the contents of the e-book. If you have a moment, please let me know what you think. What you liked or what you'd like to be improved.

To read all my dancing articles, visit  
[www.princepsdance.uk/blog](http://www.princepsdance.uk/blog)



*Marcin Raczynski*