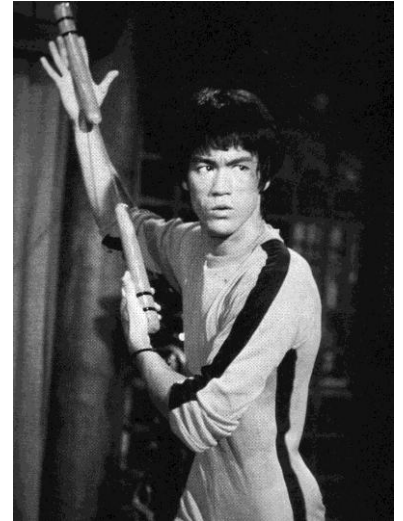




# Why Martial Artists make Better Dancers

## The Link between Martial Arts and Dancing

by Geoff Bennett



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Did you know that Bruce Lee - perhaps one of the greatest legends in martial arts - was also Hong Kong Cha Cha Cha Champion in 1958? Indeed, Bruce Lee was an accomplished Latin dancer in his hometown of Hong Kong before moving to the US to study and develop his martial arts system, Jeet Kune Do (Way of the Intercepting Fist).

So what was it about dancing that young Bruce found so interesting when to the rest of the world would only know him for his fighting skills?

Well, here is one good reason: great dancing needs a lot of talent in all the right dance areas including balance, timing, co-ordination, footwork and sensitivity. Superior martial artists require many of the same skills, often overlooked by power-hungry males!

Martial artists that understand and develop these elusive qualities often naturally move to translate these skills to the dance floor!

The opposite scenario of course applies too: talented dancers are at a huge advantage when starting off in the martial arts. Bringing with them rhythm, timing, physical awareness and flexibility, the transition from dancing to martial arts can be a hugely rewarding one. While the diversions and enjoyment of dancing are multiple, the inner sense of confidence that martial arts can provide is second to none.

A prime quality shared by both dancers and martial artists is the ability to work with a partner, that is, 'the lead'. To be able to read your partner and follow their movements correctly in both time and space, whilst remaining balanced so that the two of you are in total harmony, is at the core of the true martial arts experience.

Anticipating your partner's intentions and therefore compensating for every possible error in judgment, whether by fault of balance or miss timed movement, is equally critical. In martial arts the action can be a little more intense but the speed and tempo of great Latin dancing can also approach 'fast and furious'! You have to execute your skills in defined area and even utilize your peripheral awareness (non-focused lateral visual contact) to avoid collisions on the dance floor.

Sensitivity of the palm and wrist to directional control in order to lead and spin is also used in the martial arts of Wing Chun and Tai Chi, and other systems where perception, awareness, sensitivity and control are highly valued, not just power.

It is interesting to observe that many of the 'showy' dance moves used today could have come straight out of martial arts 'text books' written thousands of years ago. A performance move often seen in partner dancing involves the man sweeping his right leg up and over his outstretched left hand, momentarily breaking contact with his partner - in martial arts otherwise known as an *outside crescent kick*! Or how about the dynamic spinning routines in breakdancing where the performer starts by twirling his legs overhead, spins on his back and then pops onto his hands? No better example can be found than Jet Li's Wu Shu exhibitions in the movie *Once Upon a Time in China*. Then, of course, there is the example of *Capoeira*, a beautiful and powerful fusion of Brazilian rhythms, music, dance and martial arts.

Many of the same skills at work in dance are just applicable to the martial arts, and especially in Kung Fu where you are not just employing power but all the subtle talents of dancing as well.

### Training Times at Bass Hill

**Mondays**  
**6.00-8.00 pm**

**Saturdays**  
**9.30-11.30**

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# Photo Gallery

