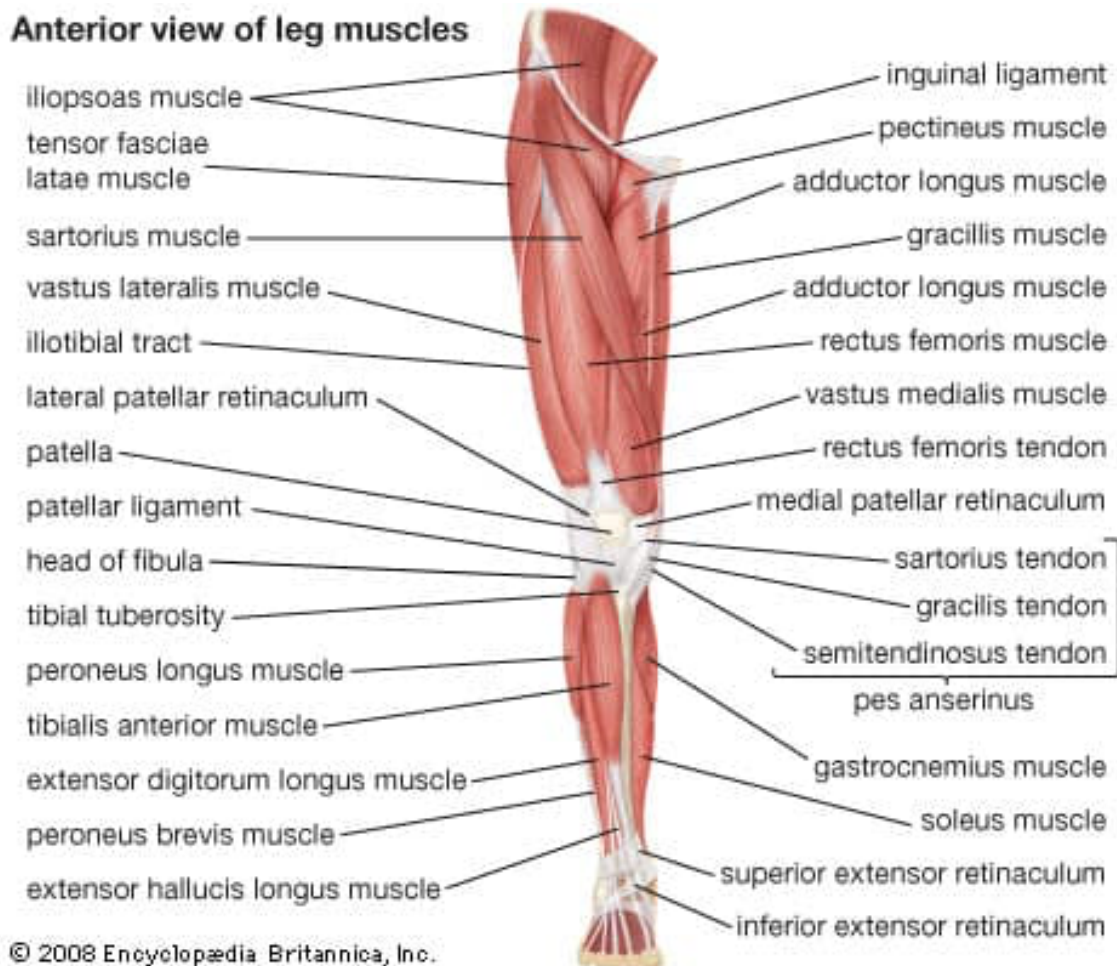


One Important Leg- The one you are standing on!



As a dancer at any level beginner to professional there are certain types of movement one is expected to produce. Flawlessly I assure you but sometimes the most simple of things are in reality the most profound.

Simply put a dancer in any style must learn specific actions to produce the desired effect of the style of dance one chooses to perform or participate in. Bend or lower, straighten or rise, open and close ones legs. Sounds simple but it can become a reoccurring nightmare. I use the leg action as a primary reference because one can only start from the floor where the foot is connected at the ground level. You only have one important leg “the one you are standing on”. You can swing away with the free leg (or side) and try to fly but loss of balance is sure to be your end result.

The basic action of lowering to learn how to do a “ballroom” walk, roll ones weight and push through the foot and across the floor if practiced incorrectly of course produces incorrect movement and memory. And in the end you are what you look like.

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I would like to reference to my previous article of “foot pressure” and what muscles in the foot claw the floor in that suction cup type action through out any lowering process. Please keep that in mind as the first action of a lowering. Drawing the energy up from the floor. All leg muscles are engaged as a result of this action. Also remember it is all done with a counter balance energy. If you are lowering down with the foot and leg the top of your head is pulling up.

Upon completion of this action we will want to rise or continue forward, side or back. Either way these are the next actions to take. We are trying to move “our bones” around the room BUT the muscles and ligaments hold those bones together. Therefore the muscles must be engaged at all times.

After lowering you will notice a flexed or bent knee and the angle of the shin bones(Tibia-Fibula) will have shifted slightly forward to the front of the foot. Changing the angle of the ankle as well. From this point the dancer must keep constant focus on pushing down and away from the floor encouraging the knee to push or roll forward toward the tips of the toes, (assisted constantly by the grip and push of the foot) . From this point the most difficult part to me is about to begin. The natural action of kicking back the knee toward the heel in a straightening or hyperextension like action(when rising or progressing forward or back) is what the true cause is of loss of control and balance. By keeping muscular focus on constantly pressing the knee forward with resistance is the guarantee of how one maintains balance to roll the weight forward across the foot(think big toe nail) and the floor. A test would be to be able to slightly lift your heel at all times.

If a dancer decides to rise as in the Waltz, turn or spin, the top of the thigh(femur bone) and all the quadriceps, hamstrings, and the hip joint (hip flexors) must follow in the same line creating this pushing-pressing down and away action. Again up, down or sideways or backwards it is all the same tracking action of the body weight through the foot.

Regarding the hip flexor to help your balance. You can think of lifting or energizing your Pubic Crest(bone) up to your sternum, a possible slight squeezing of the buttock muscles a.k.a. gluteals (hip rotators) all these areas are in a constant state of engagement and never relaxed. Once you have achieved this muscular control you can bend and shape and progress in the artistic expression of your choice.

The foot and leg will literally pull the rest of your body (core) through the foot in the correct and desired shape of your choice. Think Michael Jackson and his RHYTHM “moon walk” or cross-country skiing. The result will be a full body awareness from foot to head and will allow you to do several things. Create a conscious state of balance from the inside out, manipulate certain body parts at desired times for musicality or artistic expression, allow you to keep your head and shoulders balanced correctly on top of your spine for finer tuning and stronger poise and presence. Also your spine, joints and bones will fall in line like a slinky domino effect. It is a joyful feeling once a

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body mind and spirit has this rhythmic awareness. It can only ripple to bigger and better things.

If it is easier to stand at a wall or a barre and do these actions in a static pose then do it. Practice lowering on the leg closest to the wall. Duplicate the above instructions. At the same time either pick the opposite knee up off the floor in front of you and practice extending it forward side or back. Rise up and down with the rolling actions described above a million times. Make sure your standing shoulder is lined up over your standing hip, leg and foot. Pick your arms up and interlock your fingers behind your head (press the back of your skull into your hands) to activate your Rhomboids and Latissimus dorsi muscles as a counter balance for your upper body and arms. As long as it all comes from the standing leg, its actions and connections you will be projecting your body weight across the floor or in the air all from the simple reference of pushing or tracking the weight through the foot. The possibilities of freedom and free will are endless . After reading and applying these exercises I hope no one ever says to you "You haven't Got a Leg To Stand On"! And in your heart you will always know you just have one!

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