



Physics and the Art of Dance: Understanding Movement

By Kenneth Laws

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Written by a physicist with professional dance training, *Physics and the Art of Dance* explains how dancers can achieve better, safer performances through an understanding of physics in motion. Using simple, non-technical terms, Kenneth Laws combines his knowledge of both physics and dance to describe how the laws of gravity, momentum, and energy affect dancing bodies. The book explores the natural laws that govern the subtleties of balance, the techniques of leaps and pirouettes, and the impressive lifts and turns executed by ballet partners. Finally, Laws offers insight into two current discussions in the dance world--the effect of body size on ballet technique, and the relationship between science and the art of dance.

Beautiful, original stop-action photographs by Martha Swope, along with clear diagrams, illustrate the concepts described in the text. Plus, an intriguing "puzzler" at the beginning of each chapter provides an engaging entrée into the topics presented. For those who want a more advanced understanding of the physics, extensive appendices are provided.

This new book combines the best features of Laws's widely acclaimed *The Physics of Dance* and *Physics, Dance, and the Pas de Deux* by Laws and Cynthia Harvey. Its expert application of the basic principles of physics to the art of dance will be an invaluable resource for dancers and dance instructors and will open a new level of appreciation for lovers of the form. It will also appeal to physicists who seek to include the arts in their scientific pursuits.

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Editorial Review

Review

"[L]ucid, friendly, and to the point. Laws obviously knows his ballet as well as his physics...This book will surely have immense value to dancers...[F]ascinating to see physical principles applied in such practical detail to positioning the human body in the beautiful and abstract movement of the ballet."--*Physics Today*

"[T]his volume provides clear explanations of the physical laws that describe the way nature controls balance, leaps, pirouettes, lifts, and turns; the effect of body size on ballet technique; and the relationship between the science and dance...Excellent photographs and diagrams illustrate the text. Providing a new understanding of the application of physics to ballet that results in better and safer performances, this valuable resource is accessible to students and general readers as well as dance scholars, faculty, and professional dancers."--*Choice*

"*Physics and the Art of Dance* should be read by all dancers, choreographers and dance teachers. Dance artists and dance scientists will delight in the new information. The puzzlers at the beginning of each chapter motivate the reader to find logical answers. Photographs by Martha Swope are elegant; the tables and glossary are excellent. This book will be required reading for all my students."--Janice Plastino, University of California at Irvine

"Ken Laws seems to me to be an important ambassador coming to dance from the world of science. He is our interpreter and all his explanations of the physical laws are informed by, and infused with, his great love of dance and dancers." --Francia Russell, Pacific Northwest Ballet

"Which came first, gravity, human rhythmic movement, Newton's laws of motion, classical ballet, an understanding of the physics of dance, or an appreciation of the aesthetics of ballet? Which one? And does it matter? Ken Laws in this most remarkable book juxtaposes all the concepts above resulting in a clarification, enhancement and appreciation of the beauty of both ballet and physics. Laws make use of first-rate photographs and illustrations to illuminate and inform the reader resulting in a superior enjoyment of both ballet and physics."--Brian Schwartz, Professor of Physics and Vice President for Research and Sponsored Programs, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

"Laws' book is fascinating to read and one of the finest examples of the marriage of science and art in the literature today."--Gigi Berardi, author of *Finding Balance*

"Explains your steps in scientific terms...The practical lessons will surely help you out in ballet, and science class, too."--*Dance Spirit Magazine*

About the Author

Kenneth Laws is Professor Emeritus of Physics at Dickinson College. He has been active in the Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet and has instructed Dickinson students in ballet throughout the 1980s and 1990s. He is the author of two books about physics and dance and is the leading expert on the subject.

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