



TIPS FOR DANCE AND PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE



This is a selection of some of the helpful pointers that I have developed over the last few years of performing professionally in a range of venues. These are purely based on my experience and other dancers will have developed their own unique range of tools. Some of these ideas may be helpful for dancers who are new to performing but I am hoping there is something of interest here for everyone.

Happy and problem free dancing!

Prior to performance:

- Know your music and choreographies really well, to the point where you can dance them without the music. Practice back up plans, for example if you have incorporated a sword balancing part or veil item and you end up performing in a windy outdoor venue. Consider entrance moves that can be executed on the spot or as traveling steps, so you can easily adapt your pieces to smaller or larger venues.
- Always try and inspect the venue prior to performance if possible. Take a digital camera if you have access to one to take photos of the venue to look at later to plan entrances, exits. Also useful if you are dancing as a group to assess the space. Pace out the performance area and make notes at the venue of measurements, space or obstacles. Note the dance surface and suitability for your footwear.
- Have a checklist of areas that you need to cover with the client prior to performance such as an area to get changed, contact mobile phone number on the night, type of sound system, terms of payment, address, time, special requirements.
- Consider giving the client a verbal outline of your performance, particularly if you are using swords, fire or veils.
- Have a dance bag ready and prepacked. Include in it: Safety pins, spare CD (in an original format not a copy), small towel, snack, spare flat shoes (important if you dance in heels as the surface may not be suitable for heels if it is an outdoor venue), water bottle, something to stand on or slip on shoes to wear to get changed (particularly useful if you are in a toilet!) rescue remedy, basic makeup items.
- Develop a checklist to check as you race out the door to a performance, even including obvious items such as costume, veil and shoes.
- Wear a heavier perfume than usual and use a good anti perspirant. (I am not generally a fan of anti perspirants on a daily basis but for dance performance they are very useful)
- Have a small but solid meal about 2-3 hours before you perform. My favorite is a bowl of cheesy mashed potatoes as they are slow burning energy and easy to digest on a nervous stomach!
- On the day of performance drink lots of water during the day to avoid dehydration that evening
- Practice your whole routine in costume the day before including hair pieces, jewelry, shoes and the performance veil. Check that nothing catches or falls off.

At the performance:

- Always dance in shoes or flat sandals unless the surface is absolutely clean and safe. Your feet are your primary dance tool, even a crack between floor boards, glass shard on a restaurant floor or a splinter can not only affect your dance performance long term



but also be a potentially dangerous immediate injury. Outdoor venues can also be hazardous, with stages heating up in the sun, slippery surfaces, mud or rough concrete.

- Take a minute to mentally focus prior to performance, and use positive visualizations to overcome nerves. A few drops of rescue remedy can also help!

- Where possible, bring a helper or support person to liaise with the person doing the music. Ask this person to reinforce instructions for the music with the person playing the music. I also find it useful for this person to accept payment or any money on my behalf.

- Set aside time for yoga, dance stretches and warm up for at least 15 minutes before a performance. Take lycra pants to stretch in at the venue and allow time for this in your preparation at the venue. Remember to do light cardio movement before your stretches to get the blood moving around first.

- Avoid alcohol before a performance as well as while in costume. Once the performance has finished, unless audience members specifically request photos I tend to disappear as soon as possible to get changed.

- Avoid being seen in your costume prior to and after performance is finished.

- Consider having a professional looking and groomed set of clothes to change into after the performance. Also think about the image you are presenting to the client and audience members as you arrive and leave a venue.

Music tips:

- Avoid music that starts straight into your opening piece as you may be performing somewhere where you have little control over the sound person. Allow time for an entrance and use intro music of 30 seconds or so to allow music levels to be adjusted as well to help create an atmosphere of anticipation.

- Have CD pre recorded and tracks in order, do not rely on music person to get the order right

- Write your name and instructions on the CD, put it in a clearly marked case.

- Write on the outside for the music to be played as loud as possible as it can be difficult to get the music turned up once the performance is underway.

Costume tips:

- One of the most useful items I use in performance where I am wearing a straight skirt is a tight black or light coloured lycra underskirt, cut away so that it cannot be seen around the edges of the costume. This is quite tight and so does not need elastic in the waistband and once it is pinned to the skirt, it stops the skirt being transparent, gives a firmer outline and is also much easier to throw into the washing machine after a sweaty performance.

- Make cloth bags for costumes to be stored in, stops wear and tear and can be made from bits of old material. This also allows the costume to breathe if it is put away after a sweaty performance.

- Have the costume put away in a carry bag at all times when traveling or after the performance

- If taking a sword, have it in a long material or canvas bag with handles that can be easily transported. These are relatively easy to make up from upholstery material with a zip. If you are traveling overseas a cheap and effective holder (practical rather than highly attractive) can be made from a length of plumbing pipe with one end glued closed and the other end that unscrews.

- Powder sprinkled in shoes helps grip

- If you are balancing a sword, rubbing a candle along the balancing edge helps with grip on hair, particularly if hair is freshly washed

- Velcro patches or safety pins on top of skirt help stop belt slipping

- Do not rely on one catch or fastener for your belt or bra, two is safer and more effective.

- Hang your bras and belts out to air for a day or so after your performance, they will last longer.

Good luck and happy dancing!

