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Over 80% of Ballets Are Still Choreographed By Men

Ballet Hispánico, here in Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's *Linea Recta*, danced the most work by women, of the companies studied. Paula Lobo, via Ballet Hispánico

In the past several years, ballet has been called out [time and again](#) for not fostering, presenting and commissioning the work of women. Recently, highlighting women ballet choreographers has become [somewhat of a trend](#), with companies pioneering initiatives to try to close the gender gap, or presenting all-women programs.

But numbers don't lie, and unfortunately, we still haven't made much progress.

[A new report](#) released by the [Dance Data Project](#)—a nonprofit [launched earlier this year](#) to assess gender inequity in ballet—looks at the 2018-2019 seasons of America's 50 largest ballet companies (this list is determined by budget, and "ballet" is defined loosely: The list includes companies like Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and L.A. Dance Project). Here are the biggest takeaways:

81 percent of works last season were choreographed by men.

That's 520 of the total 645 works performed by these companies last season. Looking at just full-length ballets the number grows worse: 88 percent were choreographed by men.

One bright spot: Only 65 percent of world premieres were choreographed by men—but of full-length world premieres, 90 percent were by men. Men choreographed 70 percent of mainstage world premieres, although women did have more opportunities in non-mainstage world premieres, which were split 55 percent men and 45 percent women.



BalletMet danced all works by men last season. Jennifer Zmuda, Courtesy BalletMet

70 percent of last year's programs were exclusively work by men.

Ballet Arizona, BalletMet, Oklahoma City Ballet, California Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre and Texas Ballet Theater danced 100 percent work by men all season long. Many other companies presented programs with no women choreographers on them.



Jessica Lang's *Her Notes*, one of ABT's recent commissions from women. Rosalie O'Connor, Courtesy ABT

Some companies—especially small ones—are making progress.

By and large, the companies programming the most works by women are relatively small ones: Ballet Hispánico, Eugene Ballet Company, Dayton Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Sacramento Ballet, Ballet Austin, Cincinnati Ballet, Charlotte Ballet and Ballet Memphis.

One notable exception: American Ballet Theatre, whose 2018-2019 season consisted of 35 percent work by women and who DDP director of research Isabelle Vail says is "relentlessly championing women." While [ABT's Women's Movement](#) has marked a shift in their programming, [this feels like a bit of an exaggeration](#).

It's disheartening to note that of the 10 companies who performed the most works by women, five of them actually only performed between 30 and 40 percent women-choreographed works.



Ballet Memphis, led

by Dorothy Gunther Pugh, performed 31 percent work by women last season. Ari Denison, courtesy Ballet Memphis.

Having women lead makes a difference.

Of the 10 companies that programmed the most women last season, five of them are led by women. And of the 10 that have programmed the most women for the coming season, four of them are led by women. Considering far less than half of the largest 50 companies are led by women, this feels notable. (Although, there are more women in artistic director positions in small companies than large ones, and small companies tend to program more women.)



Both last season and this coming season, Texas Ballet Theatre will exclusively dance works by men. Ellen Appel, Courtesy TBT

Things are looking slightly better for next season.

According to DDP, 79 percent of works already announced for the 2019-2020 season will be choreographed by men, and 62 percent of programs will feature work exclusively by men.

Some companies who performed few works by women this past season will improve their track record slightly, like Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre and BalletMet. Others, like Sarasota Ballet will be dancing even less work by women in the coming season. Ballet Arizona and Texas Ballet Theater will again dance works exclusively by men.

More programming announcements are sure to come for next season, so these numbers could change—hopefully for the better.

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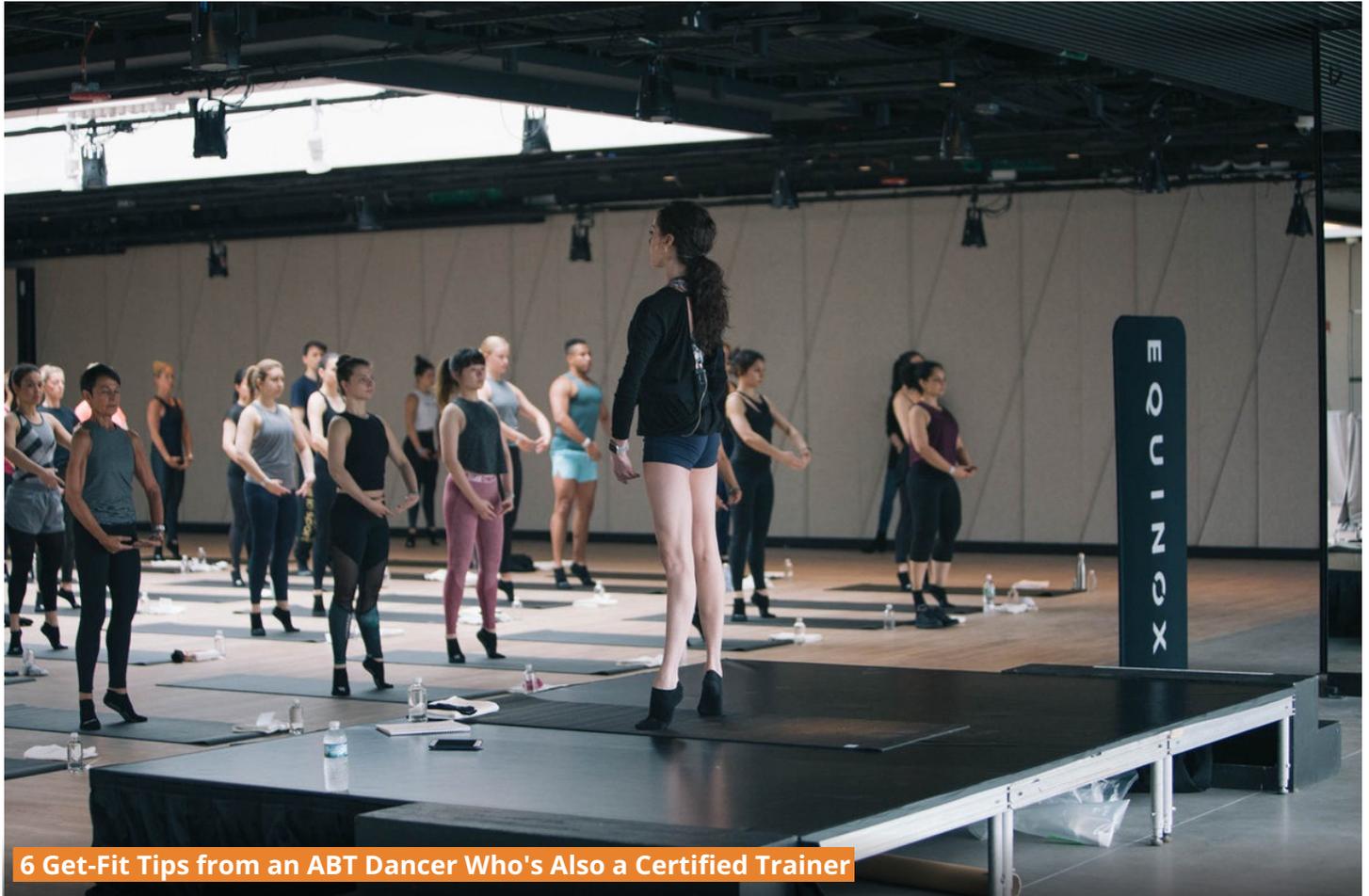
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Jul. 31, 2019 04:33PM EST



6 Get-Fit Tips from an ABT Dancer Who's Also a Certified Trainer

Boren teaching a class for an Equinox event. Photo by Will Mayer for Better Half Productions, Courtesy ABT

We all know that personal trainers can help dancers condition their bodies more effectively. But trainers who are also dancers themselves? Now that's a uniquely valuable perspective.

Take [Kathryn Boren](#), an American Ballet Theatre corps member who got certified by the National Academy of Sports Medicine last summer, following in the footsteps of her colleagues [Thomas Forster](#) and [Roman Zhurbin](#). Her weekly [Conditioning for Dancers](#) classes in New York City are filled with everyone from athletic men to older women (including one ABT donor who's attended every single time). But those who might get the most out of her workouts are the dance students who attend. They walk away with exercises and advice tailored for their particular challenges—coming from someone who knows those challenges intimately.

Boren recently spoke with *Dance Magazine* to share her best cross-training advice for dancers looking to improve their fitness.

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Jul. 31, 2019 10:48AM EST



Studying Ballet Dancers Could Help Us Treat Stroke Victims—and Build Better Robots

Dagmar Sternad is a professor of biology, physics, and electrical and computer engineering at Northeastern University. She's also a bit of a dance obsessive. And her innovative work with ballet dancers could have far-ranging implications for the worlds of both medicine and robotics.

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Jul. 31, 2019 08:15AM EST



Surgery for Better Flexibility? Not Worth It.

Getty Images

My artistic director suggested that I get surgery to fix my average flexibility if I want a company contract. Yet he casts me in nice roles even as an apprentice. I don't know what to do.

—Anonymous

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Jul. 30, 2019 01:52PM EST



Thom Yorke in *Anima*

Tunneling through the labyrinth of Prague's underground transport system, a subway car is packed full of dreamy-eyed commuters. Drifting between states of sleep and consciousness, the somber-clad workers perform a mechanical dance of nodding heads and drooping shoulders.

Radiohead frontman Thom Yorke, who executes the same choreography as his fellow travelers, struggles to make a connection with a female passenger danced by Dajana Roncione (Yorke's partner in real life).

The opening images of the new short film *Anima*, now on Netflix, are playful yet dystopian, accompanied by a soundtrack of electro beats and Yorke's dronelike vocals that are sourced from three songs on his latest solo album of the same name. But there are no vain attempts to link the singer to his music by mouthing the words on camera. Instead, he portrays an unnamed protagonist in a loosely woven narrative performed through dance.

Inspired by silent cinema, *Anima* recalls an era when screen actors were strongly encouraged to hone their dance skills for stories told through the body.

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