

# A Good Sport

LatoINETTE Wright

As a rule, many people are quick to divide themselves into groups in some sort of way. Whether it's by religion, background, or race, few things are able to unite people. The Olympics is one of them. For those few nights, people find it within themselves to see past their differences as they cheer for their country and, sometimes, someone else's.

Every two years, the Olympics takes over the world. The Winter and Summer Games combined feature more than 30 sports. This number changes over time, however, as sports are added or removed. With the huge variety, from equestrian to water polo to curling, there is something for everyone. Additionally, there are some sports that aren't featured in the Games but are recognized as sports by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), such as bowling and even chess. Still, there are many competitive activities that aren't even recognized as sports by the committee – but which definitely deserve to be. One of these is dancing. While “Dance Sport,” or competitive *ballroom* dancing is recognized by the IOC, there are dozens of other genres that are ignored.

Many people argue that dancing is actually an art and not a sport. This is logical, especially if dance is compared to track and field or basketball. In both of these, there is a clear winner and clear losers, while who is considered the better artist is often open to interpretation and preference. Still, there are also many valid points for why dancing indeed deserves its place in everyone's minds as a sport, as well as even a place in the Olympic Games.

First of all, to put it simply, it's hard. As someone who has done both figure skating and ballet, I can undoubtedly say that ballet is more difficult – and figure skating is definitely not

easy. In one particular study, it even took longer for ballet dancers to get tired after completing a set of endurance tests than it did for other athletes.

But, since dancing is so artistic, and beauty is in the eye of the beholder, can it really be judged and scored in a competition like all other sports are? Actually, it's judged and scored in competitions all the time, which is demonstrated in television shows such as *Dancing with the Stars* and *World of Dance*. Even more importantly, there is an extremely popular and successful dance competition scene with categories for everyone from preschool-aged children to college students and beyond. Besides, figure skating, ice dancing, synchronized swimming, artistic gymnastics, and rhythmic gymnastics are extremely artistic and face this same problem but still have scoring systems that are considered fair.

A third point for why dance is worthy of being in the Olympics is that it's universal. A person doesn't have to understand a certain language to do it or watch it. Anyone, no matter his or her culture, can understand and enjoy watching a track and field or swimming race. Even sports that have rules, teams, and equipment, such as basketball, cricket, baseball, or hockey, can be enjoyed by everyone once the target of the game is understood – even if a person doesn't understand what a foul is, it's fun to see which team can get the ball into the net, basket, or goal the most. Dance is the same way. Whether a person is watching hip hop, tap, ballet, or flamenco, once the specific style is understood, it's fun to see not only how the performer interprets the music but also how high he or she can jump or how many turns he or she completes in a row.

As with any activity really, dancing comes with stereotypes. A common one is the negative view that is placed on male dancers. Perhaps this view would be less widespread if

dance were recognized as the amazing combination of art and athletics that it truly is. It's both an art and a sport and one doesn't decrease the importance of the other.

Being an Olympian and representing one's country is a dream for many people.

Including more sports would give more people the opportunity to see this dream come true.

Dance – especially the ballet, tap, hip hop, and contemporary genres – is loved all over the world and has indeed earned its place in the Games.