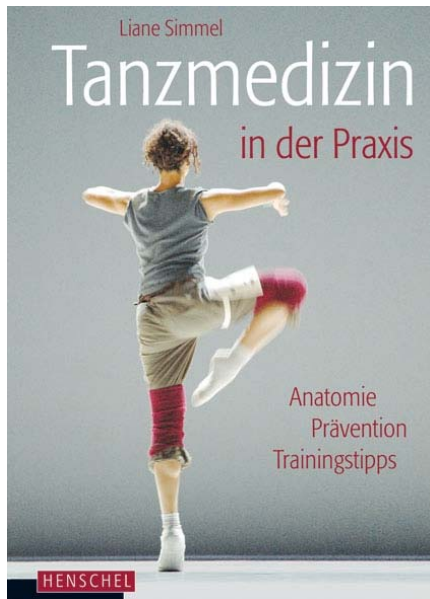


## Health Tips for Dancers

By Maja Langsdorff



What often looks so astoundingly light on the stage not only comes from a great deal of effort and ambition, but also requires such hard work that the damage can be evident long before the end of a ballet career. Dancers have a high tolerance for pain, many of them tend to ignore the pains and continue working in spite of injuries and the resistance their bodies present. Through the strain and extreme movements, classical dance demands an especially high toll. Liane Simmel's new book, "Dance Medicine in Practice," therefore should not only be recommended as required reading for all dancers, dance creators and teachers, but it also should be in all practices of doctors of sports medicine. Having been a dancer for numerous years and now a doctor specialized in dance medicine, the author conveys an abundance of information and background knowledge on anatomy, prevention, and dance training in an easily understood manner. The book shows everyone who dances, whether

as a professional or just for fun, how they can use their muscles, skeleton, tendons and ligaments in a healthier manner. Thus, there are, for example, techniques which help to avoid unnecessary shearing strain on the vertebrae while bending backwards. Highly to her credit, the author casts a critical eye on the necessary techniques of dance without rejecting them completely, as dancers so often experience in orthopaedic practices. Instead, Simmel heightens the awareness for perfidious aspects of dance, gives tips on recognizing these and suggests exercises, strengthening and relaxation techniques for prevention.

Liane Simmel systematically introduces her material and, in a comprehensible manner, explains the anatomical basis necessary for dancers to know. Hence, there is a discussion of the correct anatomical names for movements, learns how tissues are constructed and how they adapt to physical strains placed upon them, and one can read in a condensed form all the essentials on function, form and attributes of bones, muscles and nerves. Those who take the time to read this book from cover to cover will not only learn more about the body, but will also learn a lot about how use one's principle resources intelligently, to avoid injuries and damage. Simmel also discusses sensible methods and effects of warm-up and cool-down. Speaking from her own experience on how many injuries occur in dance, one chapter deals with the aspects of getting help and self-help for physical problems and the most frequent types of injuries.

The numerous black and white photos and drawings are also very helpful for better understanding, as they elucidate the theories which are often so difficult for those without a medical degree. Liane Simmel has created a book which was still missing for dancers. It is comprehensive and explains things in an easy to read manner. Naturally, it also has covered some important "sideline aspects" such as nutrition in dance, the psyche, and the construction of a sensible plan for training.

**Liane Simmel: "Dance Medicine in Practice," Henschel Publishers, Leipzig 2009, 288 pages, 24.90 Euros.**