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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Social Media and Its Effects in the Commercial Dance World

THESIS

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in Dance

by

Robert Rene Laos, Jr.

Thesis Committee:
Associate Professor S. Ama Wray, Chair
Associate Professor Jennifer J. Fisher
Assistant Professor Kelli G. Sharp

2019

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to all my loved ones for all their undying love and support and to the individuals who always believed in me and told me to keep pushing forward.

Thank you for reminding me that I can do anything I put my mind to and that treating everyone how you want to be treated goes a long way.

“Talent is God given. Be humble. Fame is man-given. Be grateful. Conceit is self-given. Be careful.” – John Wooden

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Social Media and Its Effects in the Commercial Dance World

by

Robert Rene Laos, Jr.

Master of Fine Arts in Dance

University of California, Irvine, 2019

Associate Dr S. Ama Wray, Chair

The worlds of social media and commercial dance are topics usually discussed separately. In this study, they are examined as a unit to reveal how they interrelate, hand in hand. To enable an examination of the role of commercial dance in this interrelationship, the research includes interviews of professional choreographers, dancers and directors in the commercial dance industry, with a focus on their experiences with social media as they navigate the field. The study observes the ways in which social media impact the careers of dance professionals. In addition, the research interviews uncover reasons why many commercial dancers and other artists in this world choose not to study dance in college. Suggestions about how the dance studies environment could be re-articulated to include as a mode of study a critical and practical examination of the commercial industry and its layered relationship to social media are offered. Applying what was learned from the subjects and a review of some relevant literature, my investigation included the creation of a new *Instagram* profile to experientially grasp the process of entering this social marketing and profiling arena, in order to be a better-informed future instructor in dance studies

INTRODUCTION

“Noise plus naked equals celebrity.” - Dale Carnegie and Associates, 2011

Unlocking the Tools for Success in Today’s Dance World

In June of 2016, I attended an audition in the Los Angeles area for a chance to be a backup dancer for recording artist Paula Abdul. My agent at the time at *Go 2 Talent Agency* thought I was a good fit for the casting call and booked an audition time for me. I made all my normal preparations for the auditions, including picking out an outfit that would allow me to stand-out; I updated my resume, printed out my headshot, and allowed myself enough time to become familiar with where the audition was located. Amongst the chaos of the hundreds of hopeful dancers, shuffling of headshots, and the energy and nerves that filled the room like a cloud of smoke, one particular moment stood out to me. A female dancer asked me, “How many likes and followers do you have on *Instagram*?” Up until that moment I had felt prepared, confident, and ready to take on whatever was thrown at me. In that instant, I realized I was missing a series of steps. I had never thought about whether or not I needed *Instagram* to get a job in the industry.

And then, as I approached the sign-up table, a woman handing out audition numbers and collecting headshots and resumes asked how many followers I had on social media. Once again, I didn’t have an answer. In actuality I had no idea what a follower was. I was a *Facebook* user, familiar only with having *friends* and feeling inadequate with respect to this new currency of followers. Until now, preparing for an audition had required a headshot, a

memorable outfit, and an impressive resume. But since 2016, the image you portray on social media appears to have begun being just as important as the image you portray in person.

Dancers' social media profiles must represent them in positive ways; their number of followers on social media, e.g., *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *Twitter*, must show a continual rise if they are to be seen as competitive. Immediately following this audition experience, I had a series of questions regarding success in the commercial dance world. I knew I was not presenting what was required at this moment to be successful in this segment of the industry.

A business and brand manager, King Davis of *Rollingout.com* notes, in regard to business, "Since the introduction of social media, major brands will now partner with individuals because of their personal image," and "*Instagram* has become the new business card" (Davis). It is evident that the business world has adopted, developed and itself impacted social media; it has become a living, social resume and archive. It appears that the commercial dance world has made a similar shift.

As a commercial dancer in the industry at the age of 37, I've come to realize that times have changed in the world of dance due to social media. Growing up in an era that didn't have social media and trying to play catch up has proved hard. I grew up auditioning during a time when it was normal for a dancer to wake up and drive to an audition to take part in a studio-based, live examination of skill and personality in order to get hired. Now it seems that auditions are being replaced with clicks on *YouTube* channels, images on '*Instagram* pages,' and comments on *Facebook* feeds. As I think back on my experience of recent years, I realize that the dialogue in the audition room has changed. Discussions of another dancer's

great technique or the awesomeness of their stage presence have been replaced by talk about how many followers someone has on *Instagram*. Terms such as Influencers and insta-stories get passed around like a new language that feels foreign to me.

Part of my research reflects upon my experience with Disney Entertainment. Throughout my 19-year career with Disney, I've observed a change in this segment of the dance world. From my experience in the audition room, I've witnessed how casting directors use dancers' social media profiles to find out who they are, coming to conclusions about them based on their *Facebook* page or *Instagram* posting. These are the new ways by which choreographers and directors determine whether a dancer will get a callback.

In the days following the audition, I remember being in bed and staring at the ceiling as I reflected on my dance education and dance career. I wondered if my professional resume was relevant, at all. I pondered what an upcoming dancer needs to know before pursuing a career in commercial dance. What would be beneficial to a dancer's career, what would keep them relevant? This led me to take action, because acquiring accurate and timely information to remain relevant is crucial for new artists as well as those in my age demographic and older. Gaining a dance education is rewarding, and the amount of wisdom and knowledge available from dance professors is vast and incomparable.

As an educator, I believe it's important that I share these valuable career experiences with future dancers alongside other more conventional forms of knowledge. Questions arising from my personal experience expand into the wider context in which younger dancers are currently learning their art and trade. Students I may teach in the future will also be challenged by this change, because there isn't yet an authoritative place to receive guidance on how to go about developing their own effective and authentic response to this pervasive, virtual personal marketing environment.

As a professional performer in this new age of social media, I note that things are changing rapidly, with little time or opportunity to reflect on whether or not these changes are advantageous. This research is that moment to slow down and participate in this change in a critically reflective way. A vast change in the profession has happened over a short period of time, but there has been no extensive analysis.

This research aims to uncover which new mechanisms or platforms lead to success in the commercial dance industry, an industry that includes music videos, theme parks and commercials among other sources of opportunity. By interviewing choreographers, directors, talent agents and current/non-current dancers in the commercial dance industry, in the broad sense, I aim to better understand the mechanisms and platforms that lead to employment in this new era of social media in the world of commercial dance. I will apply best practices in a short self-study to uncover further evidence of how to acquire the tools and experience needed to become a better-informed competitor in this vital, new virtual environment.

Social media are driving changes in the nature of social interaction and the degree of physical human connection. Many people share their professional and personal lives across social media. In “What Is the Real Impact of Social Media?” Maryanne Gaitho notes that “Almost a quarter of the world’s population is now on *Facebook* and in the USA nearly 80% of all internet users are on this platform” (Gaitho). This is staggering, and it is no wonder that it is hard to go anywhere without seeing people on their iPhones or other high-tech devices. Whether it’s walking down the street, at family dinners, social gatherings or even in night clubs, people seem to be attached to their phones. “One of the effects of social media is encouraging people to form and cherish artificial bonds over actual friendships” (Gaitho). I propose that likes, views and shares are the artificial bonds that Gaitho speaks to. This leads me to question the extent to which the undermining of real communication and growing lack of human interaction has permeated the casting process of the commercial dance world. I remember when the mirrors of audition rooms would reflect the image of us. These mirrors reflected our talents, personalities, style and dreams, but now the mirrors seem to have been replaced by 2D screen representations, with likes, shares and views of the individual on display. I am curious whether dancers must now resign themselves to being known or existing in the dance world only based on our posts of videos and pictures—and the tallied likes which our followers and subscribers’ control.

Summary

This research will take me from being a dancer in the whirlwind of this social media frenzy that has led me to feel lost, lacking in confidence, confused and out of date, to one who is informed and, in a position, to relay relevant, timely information. As a future educator, I also hope to pass on useful, practical and critical information to students, enabling them to avoid the frustration and confusion I once experienced. This research presents an opportunity to fill a gap in the teaching of dance. It is my hope that it may encourage other educators to engage with social media as a matter of serious inquiry. Remaining up-to-date with respect to these new professional demands might be the key to giving students relevant knowledge to support their careers in dance. Opening new doors and revealing new knowledge to help navigate in this labyrinth of social media are goals within this research.

Research Questions & Methodology

I started by identifying the key questions to investigate and outlined how I would investigate dancers' use of social media. The goal was to find correlations between social media usage and the advancement of dancers' careers. It is known that dancers use social media platforms such as *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *Instagram* as resources allowing companies and agencies to learn about them and ultimately hire and contract them for commercial jobs.

To investigate how social media and the business side of the dance industry interact, I conducted interviews with choreographers, dancers, agents, directors and a social media manager to uncover connections between social media usage and gaining employment. In-depth interviews were used as opposed to surveys and questionnaires to thoroughly examine individuals' social media usage in the commercial dance industry and to create a window into how the field copes with this new environment.

I chose this research style because I wanted to take an ethnographic approach both to the interviews themselves and to my observations of how social media affects me and other commercial dance artists. This is the same approach as Deidre Sklar uses in her essay "Reprise: On Dance Ethnography." Sklar, who has published articles in the *The Drama Review* and *Muse*, notes that, "Like the physical scientist who must account for the effects of observation on what has been observed, the ethnographer, as spectator, becomes part of the performance context and must consider her own place within the whole" (Sklar 70).

The work experience of the five interviewees who informed this study comprises most of the main sectors of the commercial dance profession: they have worked as dancers, choreographers, director, agents, singers/actors, and the group includes one social media manager. Most work in multiple sectors simultaneously, a fact which may lead to intersecting insights. The chart below illustrates this overlapping work experience.

	Actor/ Singer	Agent/ Casting	Choreo- grapher	Dance Instructor	Director	Social Media Manager
KATISHA ADAMS						
BJ DAS						
ROBERT LAOS						
MEISHA LEE						
SIENNA LYONS						
GABBY SIMICH						

Table 1

The interviewees all have at least 10 years of experience in the commercial dance industry and have secured paid jobs for themselves or have assigned contracts to other artists. The interviewees also signed a waiver allowing the publication of their names and comments for research purposes. The interviews were conducted between November 2018 and April 2019. All interviews were recorded via *Skype* and then transcribed using an online transcribing service, *Trint*, and ranged from 60 to 90 minutes in length.

CHAPTER 1

A Look at Some of the Broader Impacts of Social Media

Review of the Literature

Current literature reviewed in this thesis focuses mainly on the topic of social media and its effects on the commercial dance industry, but the review also touches on some of its broader effects, too. It is important to examine both the positive and negative impacts.

Theresa Ruth Howard of *Dance Magazine* reports that,

Social media is a space where the extremes of almost anything (beauty, physique, and lifestyle) are celebrated and held as aspirational, resulting in a growing lack of appreciation for the simple or average. In dance, the “average” or “simple” amounts to clean, solid technique, or a body that is well-formed and capable, or a beautifully-placed 90-degree arabesque. Everything has become so extreme that if it’s not 15 after 6 o’clock or eight turns, it is of no interest. (Howard)

Her article, published on July 16, 2018 and entitled “Is Instagram Changing the Dance World’s Value System?” provides an in-depth look at this emerging change in the value system. Currently, *Instagram* is the most popular social media platform for those seeking to share videos and pictures to network and build relationships. In this article, Howard describes an extreme movement and the value shift following in its wake: where once talent and experience were of paramount importance for an artist’s success, now social media has

created a digital marketing platform that is diluting these standards and taking dance down a different path. This movement lures social media users into constant competition for the attention of millions of *followers*, i.e., the group of individuals who have subscribed to receive notifications from an *Instagram* profile owner. This competition demands that every post a social media user develops must be aligned with what their followers are seeking, and anything less than perfect is inadequate. The article also questions the authenticity of the talent that is being portrayed on social media platforms.

Everyone's feed is edited and curated—no one is posting videos of things they can't do well. When you see that student in a technique class the truth is revealed: she can do that turning diagonal but ask her to stand on one turned out leg, and the jig is up. (Howard)

This passage's allusion to the narrowing effects of social media relates to my question: How can dancers be taught to use their social media platforms effectively while also promoting strategies to emphasize an authentic conveyance of an artist's truer self? Social media today all too easily allows users to represent themselves in one dimension, to strive to create a brand, to self-commodify.

In an MFA thesis by Elizabeth Gough Schultz titled, "The Sexualization of Girls in Dance Competitions," she discusses how social media plays a huge role in the lives of young girls in dance competition.

It won't come as a surprise to anyone who spends time with girls that social media plays a huge role in their lives. Through sites like Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook, girls are able to post pictures, videos, and thoughts about their lives, not only with their friends, but potentially with the entire world. However, seemingly no platform has been utilized by dancers—and young dancers in particular—more than Instagram. (Schultz 23)

A problem arises under these circumstances, because the videos and pictures are public and viewable by anyone on the social media platform. According to Schultz, information regarding username, age, number of followers, and even geographic locations of these young girls can be visible. This unchecked accessibility could prove to be dangerous, in that online predators can view these young dancers online. Although Schultz's thesis focuses on the sexualization of young girls, the closely related issue of the vulnerability of young boys to becoming targets is also noteworthy. Developing ways for young dancers to communicate safely with others in the industry could be a workable alternative to protect children from online predators.

Many questions arise from Schultz' research: should dancers make sure they are portraying who they really are on social media platforms and deliver their skill set? How can dancers do this safely and effectively?

Other discussions that arise from effects of social media concern depression. In a study published on the website of the *Child Mind Institute*, Caroline Miller reveals that teenagers and young adults who spend most of their time on social media platforms

demonstrate higher rates of reported depression than those who spent less time online. The study does not prove social media as the cause, but it does show a correlation:

A 2017 study of over half a million eighth through 12th graders found that the number exhibiting high levels of depressive symptoms increased by 33 percent between 2010 and 2015. In the same period, the suicide rate for girls in that age group increased by 65 percent. Smartphones were introduced in 2007, and by 2015 fully 92 percent of teens and young adults owned a smartphone. The rise in depressive symptoms correlates with smartphone adoption during that period.

(Miller)

Millers' research found that teenagers and young adults today are having less face-to-face interaction with their peers and instead are relying more on connections via social media. "The less you are connected with human beings in a deep, empathic way, the less you're really getting the benefits of a social interaction," points out Alexandra Hamlet, PsyD, a clinical psychologist at the *Child Mind Institute*. "The more superficial it is, the less likely it's going to cause you to feel connected, which is something we all need" (Rudolph).

Importantly, the research suggests that girls who have a higher level of interaction both on and off social media report fewer symptoms of depression than those have less face-to-face interaction.

It's important to note that there are exceptions to this correlation between depression and social media usage. For those young people who are socially isolated, for whatever reasons, in their schools and offline communities, connecting to a virtual community via the use of social media could be life-saving. The discussion of how to balance face-to-face interaction with social media interaction is relevant to the potential need for interventions to support the well-being of undergraduate students, too, many of whom have left home for the first time to enter college or a university.

In an article titled, "The Negative Effects of Social Media" by Nicolette Jordan of the *Peacock Plume*, Jordan discusses the term *social currency*, where in place of the exchange of money for goods or services, social media allows users to sell themselves as the product or brand in exchange for attention.

Social currency can be looked at in the form of likes, comments, and shares on content we post. We spend hours trying to get the perfect picture, and then even delete the ones that don't get enough likes. (Jordan)

The need for fame and recognition will remain a priority as long as society prioritizes these attributes. This craving for fame also brings up the question whether users are presenting their audience with all the dimensions of who they are or are they just editing themselves down into a narrowed persona, which could be construed as false advertisement. It appears that some users of social media are even creating online personas that have nothing to do with who they are in the real world, just to get a reaction—exchanging a kind of counterfeit currency, as it were.

People want to go viral. They want fame and recognition from a particularly anonymous audience. It can even be as simple as we want to be liked. It's natural for humans to want that positive connection with others. (Jordan)

Mental health is another issue discussed in Jordan's article; she gives examples of mental health problems that are being diagnosed, due to the use of social media.

All the attention we give social media has begun to affect mental health negatively. 50 percent of 18-24-year-olds have been diagnosed with at least one mental health issue. These include mood, anxiety, behavior and substance abuse disorders. Of that age range, 90 percent are on at least one social media platform. Social media can act as a double-edged sword for mental health. (Jordan)

It looks as if social media has created a significantly reduced, one-dimensional representation of what life is and should be. An epidemic of yearning for perfection and a sometimes narcissistic need for attention have created expectations that are difficult to realize, yet many try. Those who choose to constantly show up on social media are exhausted by the need to meet this external demand, in their anxiety to get the most likes and the biggest following. As the industry continues to cater only to these hyper-successful individuals, the cycle may only grow worse for those who persist in trying to live up to unrealistic expectations.

A further example of trying to live up to unrealistic expectations on social media is presented in an article by Margaret Fuhrer of *Dance Spirit*. She discusses an important conversation started on *Twitter* by commercial dancer Ian Eastwood. Eastwood is an A-list

dancer featured on “America’s Best Dance Crew” and *NBC’s* new television dance show, “World of Dance.” Fuhrer’s article discusses the obsession with class videos (taped dance classes) asking whether this phenomenon is a positive or negative development for the dance industry. Fuhrer asks questions such as, “Are overproduced videos presenting a dangerously misleading picture of the dance world? Is the pressure to be a class video star becoming too much for dancers to handle?” (Fuhrer). These class videos are usually put together by the instructor, and highlight the choreographed routine performed by only a select group of students in the class. This taped class is usually used to promote the class or choreographer on social media.

Class is not about an end performance, it’s about an exchange of information. If you’re sitting at home and didn’t even know all these viral dance videos are from classes, that right there is the ultimate example of how our culture has been abused by opportunists. (Fuhrer)

Opportunists in this context are dancers or dance instructors who use dance classes for their own advantage and for immediate gain without consideration of other participants. The footage is usually used to gain likes and followers or promote their classes. Clearly, this could be a very uncomfortable environment for those in the class who are not featured. Dancers respond to Eastwood’s conversation by replying that the class video trend makes them feel “...uncomfortable and intimidated in the studio, which should be a safe space” (Fuhrer), space they all seek out to grow in their artistry. Others ask why it was wrong to post and edit videos to make them entertaining. Mollee Gray, who is also an A-list commercial dancer, is quoted responding to the conversation,

So glad this is coming out. It's turning into these 'Instagram famous' dancers thinking the teacher needs them more than they need the teacher. So sad. All because of a view or 'double tap.' Always be a student, y'all. That's the only way to perfect your own craft. (Fuhrer)

Videos posted on social media are striking various emotional and philosophical chords in many dancers, and highlighting this response allows the obsession with stars and fame to be exposed for the toxicity that is also embedded within it.

Social Media Terminology

Social media has a language of its own, and many people struggle with understanding the new terminology and how to use these terms accurately. Although most of the words are familiar enough in common usage, outside of social media, they have significantly different meanings in a social media context.

Media Update is an online publication dedicated to reporting on the latest information relevant to the advertising, marketing, entertainment and social media industries. On July 30, 2018, in their article titled "10 Social Media Terms You Should Add to Your Vocabulary," the authors focus on 10 social media terms in wide use today: *Engagement, Ephemeral Content, Filter, Handle, Hashtag, Lens, Impression, Share, Story, and Twitterati* (10 Social Media Terms).

The website *Hubspot* provides a more extensive glossary of words with definitions for further understanding in an article titled "Social Media Definitions: The Ultimate Glossary of Terms You Should Know." As I explored these terms, I found *ephemeral content* to be the

most compelling, up-and-coming and illustrative term. Ephemeral content is social media content that disappears after a set period of time and is most common on *Snapchat*, *Instagram*, and now in *Facebook* Stories. Ephemeral content creates a *FOMO* (Fear of Missing Out) effect which is another psychological tactic exploited by social media executives to get users to view content. Many businesses, and social media *Influencers*, exploit this effect, too.

Influencers

The term Influencer comes up consistently throughout the literature on social media. Another *Media Update* article, “How to Become an Influencer—A 10-Step Guide for Social Media,” provides a clear understanding of what it means to be an Influencer and what it takes to acquire this status. An Influencer is an individual on social media who is considered an expert in a particular field or category. The status of Influencer is a much sought-after title to which many users on social media aspire. And it has been proved to be very lucrative. A dancer named Maddie Ziegler is an example of an Influencer who has become wealthy through her social media endeavors. Zieglers’ fame skyrocketed as a result of her dancing career on the reality TV show, “Dance Moms,” which aired on the *Lifetime Television Network*. According to Avery Hall in the article titled “The Top 10 Dance Influencers on Social Media,” published by the website *Neoreach*, Ziegler was the number one dance Influencer on social media, with over 10 million followers (Hall) in late 2017.

Media Update's "How to Become an Influencer—A 10-step Guide for Social Media"

recommends taking the following steps to achieve a level of notoriety like Ziegler's:

1. Determine your social media niche
2. Understand your social media audience
3. Choose your social platform
4. Create your social media strategy
5. Develop your marketing content
6. Engage with your audience
7. Be consistent on social media
8. Promote your marketing content
9. Collaborate with Influencers
10. Check out your social media analytics

The article includes advice on how to act on these recommendations and provides more detail on elements in the social media vocabulary listed above (How to Become). Of this list of 10 steps, I have found the following three to be most important: Social Media Analytics, Mutual Engagement, and Social Media Strategy and decided to use these three steps in my *Instagram* self-study discussed in Chapter 3.

Pia Catton's article in the *Wall Street Journal*, "Ballet Dancers Leap into Instagram, Commerce," discusses how developing a social media strategy is relevant for dancers when

pursuing and promoting their brand. A personal brand refers to the sum of what a person uniquely offers to their followers on social media. It distinguishes a person's vision, values, and way of life. This personal brand should set an individual apart from other Influencers on social media (Catton).

Target Audience

Building a brand and becoming an Influencer requires a person to learn what their *target audience* wants. A target audience is the group of people who want to follow an individual and be influenced by them on social media. According to Catton,

The photo-sharing app has become the go-to social media platform for dancers of all ages. They post photos of bloody toes, mistakes in class, physical therapy and, of course, deliriously beautiful performances shot from the wings. As a virtual portal to the dance world, *Instagram* has also attracted an enthusiastic audience—and around that, a newly dance-centric marketing landscape has emerged (Catton).

Engagement like this has created a wide audience, which is good for expanding the reach of the dance industry. The article also discusses how most major companies of all kinds are constantly interacting with social media, bringing new ideas to make new products more and more attractive.

Interestingly, research reveals that social media users can enhance their Influencer profiles by paying for likes in the 1000s to enhance their following.¹ In another interview by

¹ <https://tinyurl.com/yyc9wnqc>

Pia Catton, she spoke to the hip-hop dancer AntBoogie. AntBoogie is the founder and leader of a commercially successful dance group known as The Amount Boyz. Throughout the interview, AntBoogie talks about how dancers are now often required to have a high social media following if they want to get paid bookings. “Pay for the followers so you can book the job. It gives you the opportunity to level out the field. Don’t let your ego get caught up with that. It’s a business” (Catton). This short interview highlights ways in which social media is changing the way dancers audition in the commercial dance industry. “If you’ve been told to have more social media followers, then why are you not paying for followers?” (AntBoogie quoted by Catton). This seems rather cynical, but it would appear to be standard. This interview elevates the conversation about why choreographers, performance artists and major companies now require dancers to have large social media followings before they are considered for a job.

A Close Look at Some Other Common Social Media Terms

The team at *Media Update* notes that a large number of “new social media terms have come to light over the recent years, and it can be confusing to keep up with all of them” (10 Social Media Terms). Here are a few prominent terms that have surfaced in the world of social media.

'Engagement' refers to any action taken by a social media user on your page. This can be in the form of 'Likes', 'Reactions', 'Shares' or 'Comments'. For example, if a user on your Facebook page has 'reacted' to your post by choosing to 'Like' it, they have *engaged* with that particular post. And those engagements can add up very quickly. (10 Social Media Terms)

Having more engagements on your social media platforms can lead to more *impressions*, which refers to the number of times your posts have been seen by a user on social media. One example of this is when users see your post on a social media platform, perhaps as a result of clicking on a *hashtag*:

Hashtags on social media refers to any word or phrase that follows the '#', or hashtag symbol. Hashtags are used on social media as a way to find content about a specific topic, or as a way to make a user's content more discoverable to other users. For example, if a user posted on social media using #mediaupdate, they could find another user's content about that topic by clicking on the hashtag. (10 Social Media Terms)

Each time a user views your content, that is tallied by the social media platform as one impression for that particular content.

The maximum number of impressions your post receives is based on the number of people you are connected with on social media. If someone else *shares* your post, to their own *timeline* or personal page, you can gain *impressions* from their audience on social media, too. (10 Social Media Terms)

Shares refer to “the number of times any user’s piece of content has been re-posted on social media” (10 Social Media Terms). The Share feature on social media is a clickable button that allows a user to repost another users’ content to their own *timeline*, which is their personal newsfeed. “For example, if a user clicks on the ‘Share’ button on *Facebook*, they’ll have the option of sharing that post either with another friend, on their News Feed or via *Facebook* Messenger” (10 Social Media Terms). More engagements lead to more impressions which can lead to more likes, shares and followers.

Another way to create more engagements is by creating content that is *ephemeral*; in other words, content that is fleeting and not archived beyond a certain time period. Content like this is most common on *Snapchat*, *Instagram Stories* and *Facebook Stories*. In this case, collections of photos or videos are typically compiled into one album and then shared with other users on these platforms. These stories have a lifespan of only 24 hours. Many dancers use this feature to show rehearsals content, choreography, and moments of their lives that they want to share with their followers. Messages to friends on *Snapchat* are ephemeral as well, because they disappear once someone has opened the message. Many people prefer posting ephemeral content because they know certain targeted users are more inclined to view it at a certain time or may even do so regularly at certain predictable times. Taking advantage of this marketing method doesn’t require fancy camera equipment or video editing software. The rise of ephemeral content is due to the fact that nearly 77% of all adults have a smartphone, and “That number only increases as the age bracket becomes closer to the college age” (Mobile Fact Sheet).

And the power of images and other forms of visual content to attract attention and increase social media engagement and content sharing is clear. According to an article by Anna Guerrero at *JeffBullas.com*, the website of top social marketing Influencer Jeff Bullas, touted by *Forbes* and other big names in business communications as the world's premier digital marketing strategist and consulted by Chief Marketing Officers world-wide, "Do you want [to] double your social engagement and get your content shared like crazy? For small businesses and brands everywhere, posting multiple images on social media has been proven to have massive traction" (Guerrero). Social media users are not only more likely to share visual content posted by aspiring Influencers, they are also more engaged with it.

Becoming an Influencer

Influencers are considered the backbone of social media. According to Inga Johnson of *ExpertVoice*, an "Influencer is someone who is seen as an expert in a category. They're also sought out for their recommendations on what to buy" (Influencer Marketing Buzzwords). Using social media metrics and audience demographics, *Time Magazine*, named Maddie Ziegler as one of the most influential teenagers and the number one dance Influencer on social media (Neoreach).

In *Dance Magazine*, Howard observes, "Having an outsized level of visibility can earn these *insta-stars* money, as they get sought by dance organizations and other brands to become 'ambassadors'" (Howard). A *brand ambassador*, sometimes called a *corporate ambassador*, is someone hired by an organization or company to represent a brand in a positive light to help increase brand awareness and sales. Many dance clothing companies such as Dancewear

Solutions and Discount Dance Supply accept applications year-round from kids and teens between the ages of 4 and 17 with appealing personalities, a passion for dance and a strong technical dance background. These companies are looking generally only for dancers who can fit into the small-sized dancewear samples supplied for their photo shoots.

In an article published in *Forbes*, YouTuber and entrepreneur Michelle Phan is quoted as saying, “The beauty of the internet is there’s a niche market for everything, and if you can focus on it, you can build a sustainable and viable business out of it” (Robehmed). Phan mentions that finding a niche could be step one to becoming an Influencer on social media. Finding a topic or brand that you’re excited about and focused on should be something that shows your individual identity. It should be something that “Will set you apart from other Influencers on social media” (Robehmed). Step two to becoming an Influencer is finding and getting to know your Target audience. The type of research and knowledge a dancer should look for here includes: the kind of content to share, the social channels to use, and the type of engagement their target audience seek. Knowing what your target audience wants and needs will give you a better picture of what you should be offering as an Influencer.

In the same way that different content is suited to different platforms, there are certain times during the day that will boost post engagement. Knowing *when* to share is just as important as knowing *what* to share and organizing the dates and times when you’ll publish content across each platform with this in mind can be an effective strategy for maximizing engagement.

Although social media platforms have certainly created more opportunities for all dancers to promote themselves, the industry seems to show a bias toward more influential social media users. This thesis highlights unique information from professional choreographers, dancers, and directors in the commercial dance industry, and examines their experience and expertise in the field with regard to social media usage and the effects it has on a dancer's ability to remain competitive in the commercial dance world. These sources seek to identify the ways in which social media can either enhance or hinder a dancer's career, depending on the platform being used and how the dancer chooses to use it. I took what I learned and turned it into a self-study to analyze how a novice learns the technology, and to what effect. I turn now to these professionals for their insights.

CHAPTER 2

How Dance Professionals Perceive Social Media: Three Interviews Katisha Adams—Changing the Game

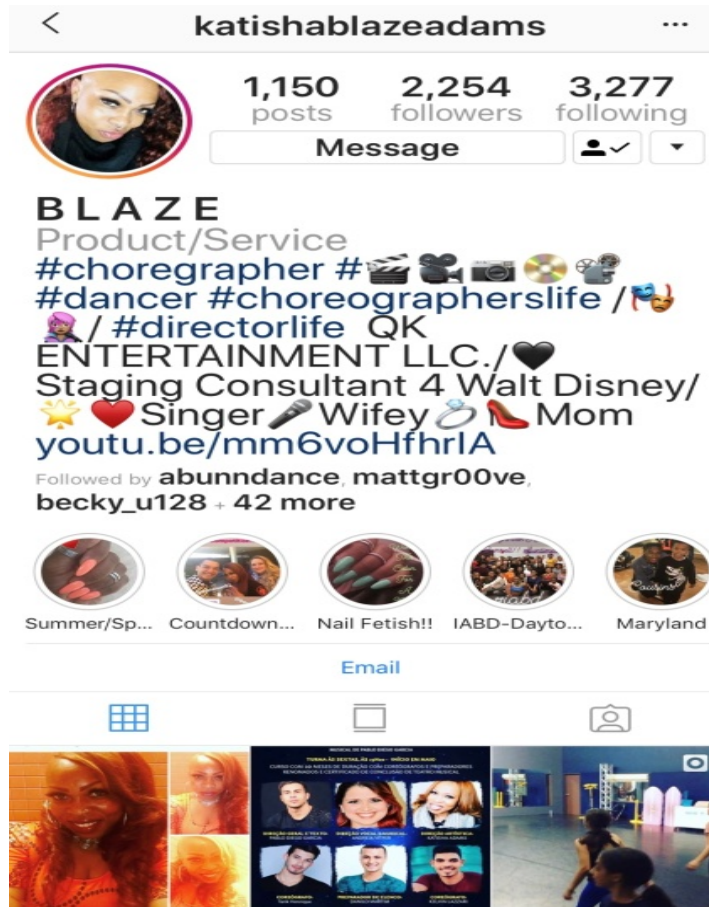


Fig. 1. Katisha Adams' Profile on *Instagram*, showing the number of her posts, photos, and video texts that are archived. 'Followers' indicates the number of people or accounts who have elected to follow her activity. The final number, above 'following', reflects the number of people or accounts that Katisha monitors, and these show up on her daily news feed.

This chapter features Katisha Adams, Meisha Lee and BJ Daz, who are currently choreographers, dancers and directors working in the commercial dance world. Katisha Adams is a dancer and choreographer who has worked with artists such as Christina Aguilera and has also set choreography for various Disney parks, including Disneyland

California and Disneyland Singapore. Immediately upon being asked to be interviewed about how social media is ‘changing the game’ of commercial dance, Adams agreed. The ‘game’ in this context refers to the processes dancers and other performing artists use to acquire work.

I opened with the question, “Does social media play a role in the success of a dancer’s career?” She responded, “Yes, definitely” (Adams). According to Adams, Instagram is currently the platform most popular with young audiences. They have been drawn to this site because its consistently fast uploads dominate the market. In an article published on the website *The American Genius*, Sienna Kossman wrote, “93 percent of Influencers focused a majority of their marketing efforts on Instagram this year and another 82 percent expect that to carry over to 2018” (Kossman).

Katisha noted that even voice actors are using character filters on *Snapchat* to get contract work as voice-over actors. Character filters or ‘Face Lenses’ are filters that can transform your face, or alter your voice, into that of various characters. Voice actors are now using Face Lenses to create voices for the *Snapchat* characters.

This demonstrates that social media are dominating many different types of careers in the industry and used to assist a wide range of performers in showing off their talents.

Katisha Adams says, “It [social media] saves time, it saves money, it’s a faster way to show and look for talent” (Adams). When casting agents and performance artists hold auditions for dancers, it can be a very time-consuming operation and can cost vast amounts of money to set up, advertise and run. According to Candice Thompson in a *Dance Magazine* article titled “The Great Debate: Should Auditions Cost the Dancer?” some companies are even requiring that dancers pay to audition, providing the explanation that “... It is expensive to

hold open calls. In exchange for that fee, companies are providing a class to help dancers. Some companies are even accused of holding auditions opportunistically to collect money or advertise an upcoming show” (Thompson). It is reasonable to conclude that many companies are trying to find cheaper, time-saving alternatives to the traditional audition process.

Eliminating the Cattle Call

Reflecting briefly on my own career, in 2004 I auditioned for Janet Jackson’s Super Bowl performance. I was number 127 of over 900 dancers to attend, and in the first three hours I was there, I was only able to learn the combination. The number of people who turned out to audition for Janet was overwhelming and due to time constraints, I had to leave before I had the opportunity to actually perform the combination. This type of audition is what people in the industry call a *cattle call*. A cattle call is a mass, in-person audition for a play, movie or other production. In 2018, however, Janet Jackson announced an audition that would be initiated on social media. Using the *hashtag* #DANCEWITHJANET, dancers were able to submit a 30-second dance video (readers can use this term in a Google search to find these videos). Videos were shared via *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, and *musical.ly*. Jackson, along with her creative director Gil Duldulao, viewed the submissions from dancers to determine who qualified for the in-person audition. This idea completely changed ‘the game’, showing how to use social media to wipe out the ‘cattle call’ altogether. Eliminating this step saves time and money, not only for the casting

team but also the dancer: on money, gas, and printing headshots. And it allows everyone involved to use their time more productively.

Another point brought up by Adams was the fact that agents are slowly becoming obsolete. “Back in the day, it was mandatory to have an agent, but you don’t have to have an agent anymore” (Adams). She talked about how, in the past, dancers unrepresented by an agent didn’t do as well those who were represented. All of the highly sought-after work was once managed exclusively by agencies. If a dancer wanted a chance at an opportunity, he or she had to physically show up with copies of their resume and headshots in hand. Social media has provided a way to possibly eliminate this. “Everyone goes online, looks at your *Facebook* profiles or *Instagram* profiles, and uploads it through *LA Casting* or *Actors Access*” (Adams). *LA Casting* is an online website that, for \$28 a year, helps entertainers find talent agents, casting notices, manager jobs and companies offering opportunities to talent. *Actors Access* is a web service that allows agents and talent representatives to submit their clients online and casting directors to view their pictures, resumes and videos.

According to Adams, most castings are no longer done in person, and she “Can’t even imagine what we were doing now, back then. Who would have thought this would happen?” (Adams). When it comes to social media, Adams believes that “It’s here to stay, and the only way to keep up with it is by knowing what the trends are and finding out what works and what doesn’t” (Adams). According to Gabriela Simich, who was a social media manager for *Dancer Plug*, a global dance network that supports artists, “The only way for dancers to know what works for them on social media is by trial and error. Everyone is

different, and it works for everyone in different ways” (Simich). Social media creates a place for everybody but finding the most effective place for you can be a challenge.

BJ Daz

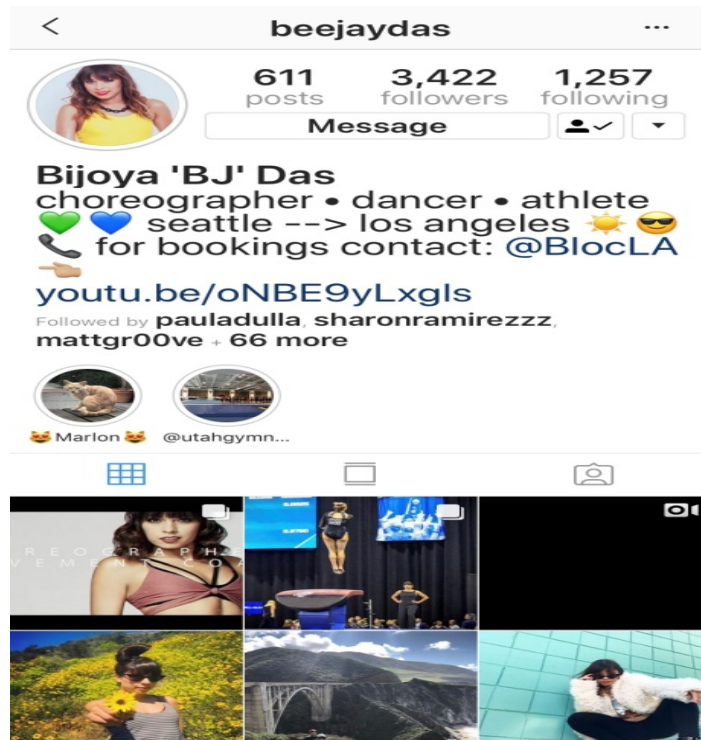


Fig. 2. BJ Daz's profile on *Instagram*, showing the number of posts, photos, and video texts that are archived. It also indicates the number of people or accounts that have elected to follow her activity. The final number, above 'following', represents the number of people or accounts BJ is monitoring, and these show up on her daily news feed. BJ has also added a link to this profile that allows her to be contacted for future work.

My next interview subject is BJ Daz, a 34-year-old commercial dancer and choreographer who has performed for many recording artists, including Pink and Beyoncé. She has also choreographed and danced for the Emmy Awards and Disneyland Resort. Daz's notable success and experience, both as a choreographer and a dancer, gives her the perspective to observe social media's impact from both ends of the spectrum. When I asked Daz whether or not social media benefits her as a choreographer, she responded by indicating ways in which it has helped speed up casting, which can be a "long and tedious process sometimes" (Daz). Furthermore, she explains that going the traditional route, asking agents to submit dancers to her for a project, can take too long, especially if a project is

moving forward at a fast pace. So now, instead of an audition, Daz and her team use their phones and tablets to search for dancers on social media, looking over dancers' videos to see what they have to offer. In this fast-paced environment, a dancer can be excluded at once from consideration if their social media platform is set to private. Daz affirms, "I ask myself; what kind of dancer are you if your social media is set to private as a commercial dancer?" (Daz). This is a scenario that many dancers may not anticipate as being a problem. On the topic of evaluating dancers, Daz states that social media "will expedite the process of direct booking dancers" (Daz). *Direct booking* refers to booking based on viewing a dancer's headshot and resume, rather than after an in-person audition. Daz also mentions that if choreographers are "on-the-fence" or disagree about a certain dancer, teams are able to use their social media to see what else they can bring to the table. In this process they can "dig a little further and see what else they can do. If dancers come off annoying on Instagram, I'm not going to hire them" (Daz). This is another revelation that could benefit dancers.

During my interview with Daz, she admitted that as a dancer, she doesn't have a lot of videos or posts about herself on social media. "I think that if I was to really be on the hustle for new opportunities, I would probably do better at taking those class videos and getting footage of me just free-styling" (Daz). This led me to ask Daz about her advice to the dancers on social media, and to those who have never used it. She replied, "I give dancers advice to use social media if it feels authentic to them. I would hate to advise any dancer to use social media or sell-out on social media if it doesn't feel right to them" (Daz).

With that advice in mind, I asked whether or not those who don't use social media are limited to certain jobs. Daz said yes; she feels everyone can make social media work based on who they are as an individual.

According to Daz, someone who chooses to sell-out on social media is someone who represents themselves in a way that's inauthentic to their own standards and morals. She advises an artist to avoid posting content he or she thinks everyone would like; instead, post content that you like and content that represents who you are as a person. According to Daz, dancers don't have to show videos of themselves dancing; they can highlight their personal style, whether it be clothing, their interest in food, or from posting other types of content that people can connect with. Some directors and choreographers will be looking for those unique qualities.

Keeping this information in mind, I asked Daz if lack of a presence on social media would limit job opportunities for a dancer. Daz does believe that a lack of social media presence will limit your job opportunities, but there are always potential ways to make the industry work for you without it. If you want to use social media, however, to attain other job opportunities, she feels everyone can make social media work based on who they are as an individual.

Daz felt the pressure of having likes and followers when she booked a commercial for the shoe brand Shoe Carnival. The director of the commercial was Tim Milgram, an Influencer in his own right, and the producer was Kaitlyn Harris, who is also an Influencer because of her work on "America's Best Dance Crew." Daz was one of only two dancers

who were not Influencers on set. The producer mentioned to Daz that it was difficult to find her on social media, and Daz was shocked by that comment. As a result of this encounter, Daz has become conscious of the shift. According to Daz, her agent sent out an email saying, “If you are an Influencer, let us know. It will change what we submit you for” (Daz).

As a choreographer, Daz doesn’t understand how people can get cast for dancing jobs based on likes or followers. “I would say that your likes on social media doesn’t always mean you’re a good dancer. Other factors come to play, like being super-hot [sexy], or people might relate to you because your steps as an instructor might be extremely simple and easy to follow” (Daz). She feels that many talented dancers and choreographers go unrecognized as a result of their limited social media following. Daz does feel that the old-school mentality of going to auditions, getting submitted through your agent and building relationships with choreographers is still a legitimate route to getting work. Still, this could limit the kinds of jobs your agent sends you to—something she had already witnessed in the communications from her agent.

You can do both. If you’re a good dancer, and you want to do commercial dance, you have to get a lot of followers. But that’s only going to help you so much. There are some people who are not the greatest dancers who have a lot of followers, and it’s not going to help them get jobs with choreographers who still have the old school mentality. (Daz)

Daz believes that there are multiple ways to navigate in the industry. “If somebody who’s a great dancer has a ton of followers, that’s just more opportunities for them. Not only are they doing the jobs I do, but they have other opportunities as well” (Daz). These “other” opportunities Daz points out relate to a dual model of gaining employment by using a traditional agent alongside social media.

Daz notes a couple of reasons why many dancers have such high followings. She thinks some dancers build their followings because of being associated with an artist they were on tour with, whose followers will then follow the dancer. Some dancers also pay people to manage and post on their social media. She was not sure what those individuals were called, but she knows that people use them. “It would be really hard for me to trust somebody to post stuff about me unless I had a personal assistant or a manager that really knew who I was” (Daz). Daz feels such services could be useful as long as posts are authentic to the person being represented.

I also asked Daz what she thought about dancers or artists who buy likes and followers and how that factors in when she casts dancers. Daz replied that, “You can tell when followers are bought, because the dancers will have a ton of followers, but they also have the same amount of likes that I have” (Daz). She warns that Instagram occasionally cleans up their app to wipe out spam and remove bots, and afterward you can see that a lot of people have lost a huge number of their followers. “Knowing that their followers dropped significantly usually means that those likes and followers were bought” (Daz). When asked whether or not Daz would ever buy likes, she replied:

I feel like it hasn't really crossed my mind to the point that I would look into doing it. I think to myself that it's not fair. I don't know if it's helping, because to me it's annoying when I see somebody that buys likes. I'm not sure where I stand on that. But I do know that a lot of people do it and I can usually pinpoint it when I look on their Instagram based on their ratio. (Daz)

As our conversation got more in-depth, I asked whether dancers should be learning about issues related to social media and its benefits, buying likes and followers, etc., information which could slowly close the gap in practical industry awareness between the commercial dance world and academic dance programs. Daz responded:

In my commercial dance experience, college degrees and dance have no correlation with your success in the commercial dance world and I think it's because of this gap that you're talking about. ... If there was some way to bridge the gap and give commercial dancers a college education, and at the same time integrating them into the industry, more commercial dancers would be inclined to go back to school. (Daz)

Daz believes that to bring information about social media and its place in the commercial world into the college setting would offer a huge advantage to those in college dance programs and help to bridge the gap between the commercial industry and college dance. Giving dancers the opportunity to be exposed to that type of training could greatly benefit them and prepare them for more opportunities in the future. Daz mentions that dance in a college setting can be more objective than in the commercial dance industry. In a college setting, a dancer can work really hard and be successful, but in the commercial

industry, it's a little more about politics, body type and your looks. She thinks it's important to remember that there are so many different lanes now and giving students options based on everything that is available to them is important.

From my interview with Daz, I realized it's important to stay relevant by keeping up with social media trends, because they are always changing. Staying engaged and relevant in the context of these changes can enhance dancers' careers, but as Daz remarks, they have to participate in a way that is authentic to who they are. As an educator who is passionate about guiding my students through the commercial dance industry, it's important for me to continue to stay up to date on what's trending.

Meisha Lee—Keeping Up with the Trend

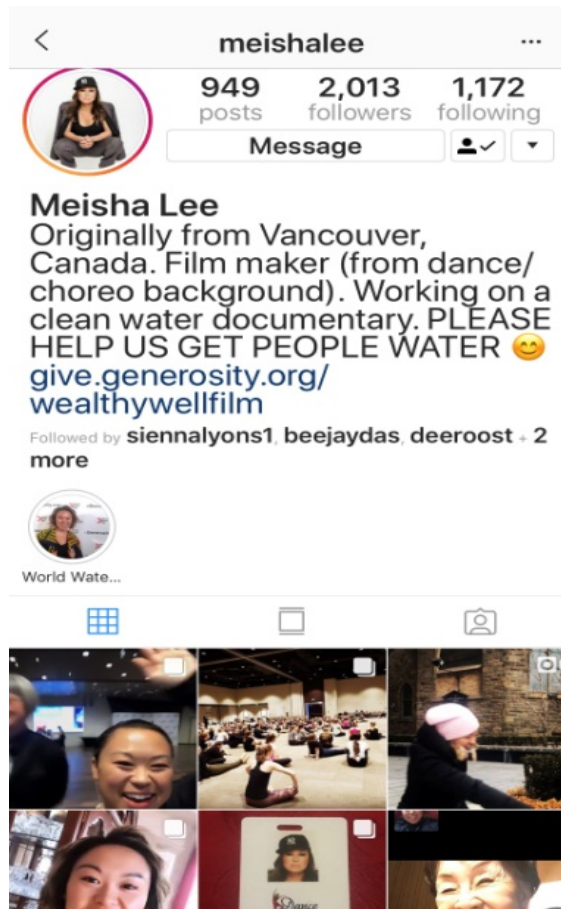


Fig. 3. Meisha Lee’s profile on *Instagram*, showing the number of her posts, photos, and video texts that are archived. ‘Followers’ indicates the number of people or accounts that have elected to follow her activity. The final number, above ‘following’, represents the number of people or accounts that Meisha monitors, and these show up on her daily news feed. Meisha has added a link to her *Instagram* profile that allows her followers to donate to her charity of interest.

In this section, I share aspects of my interview with Meisha Lee. Lee is a dancer, choreographer, and director with over 15 years of commercial dance experience. She has been successful in the entertainment industry but admits that social media has made it more difficult for her to secure work without it. In summary, her view of social media is that society has created a monster. She believes that not being on social media hinders

commercial dance professionals from gaining new contracts. Lee admits that she doesn't like depending on social media for success in her career but understands it is necessary if she wants to stay competitive in the commercial dance industry. Her situation leads to an important question: Should dancers consider learning this new skill set, and if so, who should teach them?

Lee indicated that younger people who grew up with technology readily available to them have a better grasp of social media skills and are able to build their target audiences quickly. She wonders whether approaching members of younger generations might help her learn how to use social media effectively. But Lee also has concerns with this approach. "By asking a 14-year-old who knows what or how to build a network and gain followers, are we assuming that social media is more important than a strong work ethic?" (Lee). When referring to work ethic, Lee considers proper training, a strong resume, and knowledge of the industry as basic requirements every dancer should have. But since social media has become so strongly integrated into the auditioning process, dancers must balance building a strong work ethic with developing a solid social media following.

Lee thinks that when you seek outside help, you should think carefully about the tactics that a potential social media consultant suggests for developing a following. Getting advice from someone who has been successful in the dance industry and uses social media could be an option, as is consulting someone successful in social media marketing in general. One of the risks dancers take when getting advice from a general social media expert is that this could cause them to journey down the pathway of using social media in a manner that contrasts with who they actually are.

Lee brings up an important point: a dancer will have to decide whether following the social media trend based on a given advisor's experience will be enough to supplement 'good old-fashioned' work ethic. A balance here is key.

Lee has another major concern based on what she has observed. Some dancers and actors with relatively less experience on set are regularly getting cast for highly sought-after jobs because their following helps broaden awareness of a production company's brand. This is happening more and more, because when a social media celebrity is attached to a production company's projects or brand, the celebrity is, in effect, endorsing the product, which prompts the celebrity's followers to buy or engage with that brand. The celebrity's loyal followers produce instant revenue and free advertisement for the brands, and in return these social media Influencers and celebrities grow in notoriety. In the eyes of these production companies, these Influencers play a vital role in marketing and revenue generation for their projects. From one point of view, these are smart business decisions that save the companies money, but they also raise the question of whether or not the quality of the production is being watered down.

Lee suggests that the inexperience of these Influencers hinders the success of these projects more than they help the production companies acquire more revenue. She harbors some resentment towards these production companies and is frustrated by an industry that allows social media Influencers and celebrities with little experience to thrive, while more-qualified dancers with a smaller social media presence are constantly being overlooked. In this environment, professional experience isn't enough if you don't have a social media following that will help generate more revenue for the production companies.

Lee feels that her resume, work ethic, and perseverance go unnoticed by producers and casting directors and that these are now a thing of the past. “Now the game has totally changed, and they’re literally hiring people to choreograph that have never even been on set as a dancer. They don’t know anything about blocking on set or even the etiquette” (Lee). According to Lee, social media is a new code of practice that worsens the problem with every like, share and view that is being engaged, “Should non-professional dancers and actors who exhibit unprofessional behavior be doing the jobs of professionals who put in the time and training?” (Lee). It seems that some professionals who have trained and studied to develop their craft are losing their competitiveness because they are not constantly changing their status on social media. Lee responds, “It’s really frustrating. If you ask these *Instagram* and *YouTube* people for their resume, you can see they have never worked a day in their life in a professional setting” (Lee). This quote points to a new reality that professionals like Lee are facing in the entertainment industry.

Lee observes that actors are cut from auditions because they lack social media engagement and replaced by *YouTube* Stars and *Instagram* Influencers who have a huge following. The competition in the entertainment industry has become more intense, and “Social media Influencers with a better brand just swoop in and get the job” (Lee). This is clearly disconcerting for artists such as Lee. Furthermore, she affirms that once these Influencers are hired to work on sets, directors and actors must work longer hours to train and coach these individuals because “They know they have to keep the *number count* up” (Lee). Number count in this context refers to the number of viewers tuning into the production because of that Influencer’s presence.

In each of these selected interviews, I found strong indications that social media has significantly impacted all artistic industries. Dancers and choreographers are losing work on set because companies are outsourcing their jobs to internet celebrities. It appears that years invested in expensive training is not enough; the best opportunities now require artists to be social media Influencers, too. When I asked the interviewees for information and tips that they could pass on to up-and-coming dancers regarding social media, all had different answers. There isn't a blueprint to follow, nor is there agreement about one strategy that may work better than another. Certain strategies seem to work for generations that have been brought up with this technology, but they may not work for individuals who are trying to learn social media while on the job. Lee shows hesitation about adopting these new methods while on the job. She says:

I want to know the answers, but I'm not even sure what questions to ask. I want to first find out the questions I should be asking. If someone could tell me where to find these answers, I would go and be there in a heartbeat. I've been in the industry a long time, and I have no idea what I need to do to make myself more successful in the world of social media. So, when you find the answers please give them to me. (Lee)

Lee also feels the pressure others feel of needing to put out content that is not authentic, or that they don't agree with. Finding your voice and brand on social media seems to be one of the hardest parts about getting started. When it comes to creating content, Lee says,

I'm trying to create more content that feels right for me, because I can't promote something that isn't me. Also, all the people that are really successful are sexy. And

it's hard to keep up with that. So, if I'm going to do it, I have to start trying to play around with it. What is my adventure for the day? What is fun and silly? Or even making a joke that's going to make someone laugh or make me laugh. I try to produce content that just is that nature and see where it goes. (Lee)

From my interview with Lee, I learned that dancers are not the only ones being affected by social media; choreographers and actors are feeling the shift as well. I also discovered that companies hire inexperienced inadequately trained actors or dancers for leading roles, and they hire based solely on their numbers of followers. This is hindering the production process, because they lack experience, technical skill and acumen. The information shared by Lee demonstrates that the entertainment industry is seeing a shift when it comes to the hiring process, and artists who have been in the industry for a long time are feeling the change and trying to learn the skills needed to remain relevant. My interview with Lee raised valuable questions that I pondered further as I took the opportunity to apply what I learned within my self-study. Many dancers are beginning to experience the frustrations associated with how social media engagement has become a requirement for most job opportunities. Understanding the need for social media and a strong target audience is only one part of being successful. Many dancers quickly learn that acquiring and maintaining a loyal fan base is another skill set that is not easy to acquire.

CHAPTER 3

Two Case Studies

Sienna Lyons–A Game of Chess

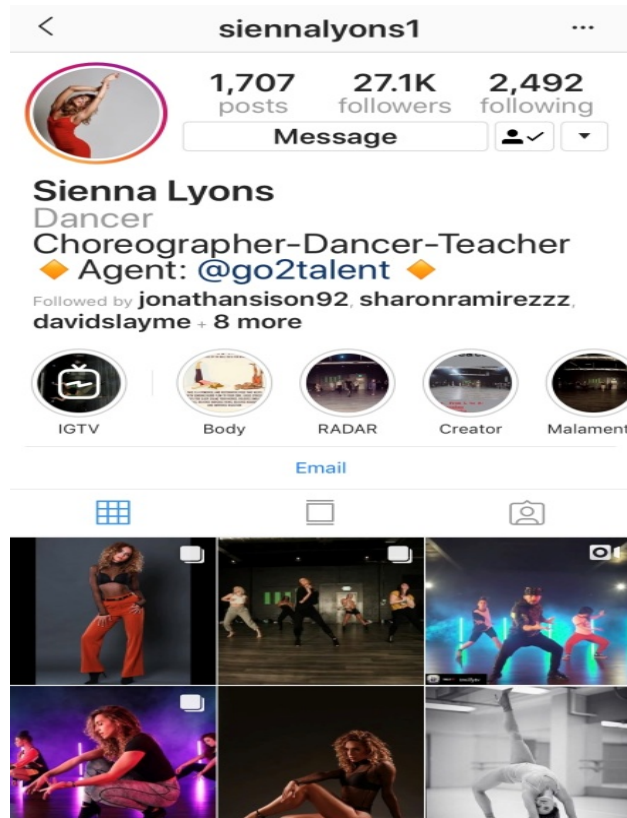


Fig. 4. Sienna Lyons' profile on *Instagram* showing the number of her posts, photos, and video texts that are archived. It indicates the numbers of people or accounts that have elected to follow her activity. The final number, above 'following', represents the number of people or accounts Sienna is monitoring, and these people show up on daily news feed. Sienna has also included a link on this profile that allows access to the agency that represents her.

In this chapter I introduce Sienna Lyons, an established commercial dancer and choreographer based in the Los Angeles area. I will also discuss my own experience using *Instagram*. Because Lyons has been a consistent user of *Instagram* and has gained a vast

amount of success because of it, I was particularly interested in hearing her share her expertise and advice about how to use that platform, currently the most popular platform among dancers.

Originally from Seattle, Lyons decided to pursue a career in commercial dance in Los Angeles, where she has lived for the past 11 years. Lyons has performed and choreographed for artists such as Janet Jackson, Jennifer Lopez, Meghan Trainor, and Selena Gomez. With 26,000 followers on *Instagram*, her quantifiable popularity has led to countless teaching and choreographing opportunities in Europe, Japan, Guatemala, Canada, Australia, and Mexico. It would be reasonable to conclude that social media is something that Lyons both embraces and has a passion for.

During our interview, I asked her to share specific stories about her experiences on social media, to gain an informed view from the inside. On the topic of getting work through the use of *Instagram*, Sienna recounted an experience she had with a 17-year-old dancer, with a following of over 500,000, who bears the same name “Sienna Lyons” on *Instagram*. The older, original Sienna Lyons was offered a job to choreograph a music video, but this was because the production company thought they were hiring “Sienna Lyons” with 500,000 followers. Sienna then did the rounds and hired dancers, booked a rehearsal space, and even prepped movement. Eventually it came to a head, and all of her experience and all that preparation for the production didn’t matter once the production company realized there were two “Sienna Lyons.” According to the original Sienna Lyons, the 17-year-old ‘junior’ Sierra Lyons with 500,000 followers wasn’t even available for the gig, but the producers still wanted her for the production because of her following. Of the incident

Sienna said, “The point of this example is to just show that booking jobs has nothing to do with talent level or experience level. You can’t take it personal, and just know that it’s what people are currently looking for; what’s right for you is right for you” (Lyons). What this production company was looking for was the highest yield of followers to co-opt into their campaign, and all of Lyons’ preparation and experience couldn’t compete with the 17-year-old dancer’s mass following. This example shows the significance and impact for dancers or choreographers of having a following in the commercial dance world. Sienna’s testimony also shows that personal resilience is needed, too, and that dancers can’t let encounters like this bring them down.

Lyons’ understanding is that “Having a huge following is now your ticket to being successful, and production companies are now using your following to view you as an established artist” (Lyons). Lyons disagrees, however, with the production company’s mentality, “People are getting hired for jobs they aren’t ready for” (Lyons). According to Lyons, having a huge following on *Instagram* doesn’t equip or prepare an artist to do the jobs or hold the positions in which they are being put.

I asked Lyons about the hiring of non-professionals to do professional jobs, which has been established by other interviewees, and she affirmed that it can hinder a production. She too recognizes that production companies are looking for mass followings so they can market their products directly to this already cultivated public. This is what Lyons calls “The New Production” (Lyons). According to Lyons, “The New Production’ is where the quality of the production doesn’t matter; all that counts is the popularity of the artist or performer and how many people their social media brand can pull into the production company’s target

audience. As stated earlier, Lyons says that this new formula is producing lower quality productions through the hiring of non-professionals to do professional work. According to Lyons, “The production is picking up the slack for a not-so-polished artist these days. If artists spent more time perfecting their craft, the package would be so much better all around” (Lyons). Saving money on marketing a production may be the reason why companies go this route, but the loss in production quality is also recognized as a major negative affect by artists. These conflicting goals of artistic excellence versus production budget may need to be resolved in future.

During my interview with Lyons, she really affirmed her position when she said, “People who have paved the way for us and have literally choreographed, danced and directed for every major artist that we ever had cared about, are having trouble finding work. Their resumes aren’t good enough for companies, to get work” (Lyons). Lyons says that these artists now have to take their expertise and experience overseas, looking for outsourced gigs, due to the scarcity of remaining work as a result of what is being taken by Influencers. Established, internationally recognized choreographers simply can’t find jobs locally in Los Angeles.

Surrendering to the Trend

Lyons feels that this “Social media trend is just like fashion or any other cultural thing that our society obsesses over” (Lyons). Unlike Lee, she is optimistic, however, and believes

the trend will right itself and the industry will return to honoring what she and others believe is real substance.

In regard to the change within the dance industry, Lyons believes that, “It definitely has taken a turn. Right now, I think it’s for the worse. Do I think it could get better? I do” (Lyons).

Until then, Lyons feels she has to surrender and play the ‘game’ demanded by this social media trend. A ‘game’, as described by Lyons, is like chess, in which she needs to make her moves with a view to putting high-quality output in the forefront, with the hope that these qualities will gain prominence once again in the future. Lyons keeps her personal life completely separated from her virtual dance life in order to maintain her “sanity” (Lyons). And while still promoting herself in the arena, she is clear on what the divide represents, stating, “I try not to have my personal life on social media because I think that's when we get more consumed. I try to just make it merely business” (Lyons). Lyons plays her game of chess by posting only dance content, which allows her to keep her personal life private. Learning from Lyons, I will try to train myself to utilize *Instagram* in this manner.

Addiction to Social Media

The resistance and separation Lyons insist upon for herself are not universal; research shows that many *Instagram* users have allowed their life on social media to become their main identity, effectively defining who they are. An example of this is Jessy Taylor, an *Instagram* blogger (with 113,000 followers), who shared her tearful emotional breakdown on *YouTube* after her profile was deleted. In an article published on *LADbible*, Jake Massey quotes one of

Taylor's laments, "I'm nothing without my following, I am nothing without my following" (Massey). According to Lyons, this is how many of her peers feel when it comes to social media; they feel it defines them. Lyons believes that "People need to realize that it is just an app, and yes, something could go wrong, somebody could hack it, and then what?" (Lyons). Lyons also talks about "not putting all of your eggs in one basket" (Lyons). By this, she means not becoming dependent on social media as a means of income without a backup plan, a lack of foresight that characterizes a lot of people on social media.

With all the talk of users and companies wanting numbers, likes, and followers, I asked Lyons what she thought about people manipulating the system by buying likes and followers. Lyons responded by saying it makes her even more confused, since this quantitative data, real or fake, is still important to companies that hire artists. She is aware that the buying of likes is happening and considers it unethical. She states, "I choose to not buy likes because it's fake. Simple as that, I want to stay as authentic to myself, my craft and to where my career journey moves naturally" (Lyons). Furthermore, she asks, "How do they know if people who have these huge followings are truly authentic?" (Lyons). It is unclear whether or not companies analyze this data closely and factor that in when casting dancers or choosing choreographers. I share Lyons' perspective and wonder how companies can still find those data important, given that people can just go out and buy fake followers.²

Although Lyons doesn't agree with some current business practices, such as hiring dancers based on social media status, she does utilize *Instagram*. And it does work to her benefit; the majority of her jobs both overseas and in the states come from *Instagram*. This is

² <https://tinyurl.com/y4ywnw2b>

because people find her on social media, and she now has an international reach because of *Instagram*. Lyons notes that, “Social media provides an outlet for an artist to show their work, and without social media, artists may not have the reach they are looking for” (Lyons). Social media is now your business card, website and an active space. Lyons also mentioned that many artists find choreographers on social media. An example of this is JoJo Gomez, a commercial dancer based in LA. Jojo has “Had the opportunity to choreograph for artist like Tinashe and Backstreet Boys due to posting her class videos on *YouTube*” (Rudolph). Gomez worked in collaboration with Tim Milgram, who was also mentioned by BJ Daz. Milgram is famous in the commercial dance world and has directed, shot and edited over 400 videos. His work has been featured on *Buzzfeed*, *TIME*, *Billboard*, *MTV*, and *Good Morning America*. He has also created content for Mattel, Vogue, Capitol Records, G-Shock, Mania Jeans, and the *DanceOn Network*. As Tinashe said about Milgram, “He has a lot of followers, so having him shoot and share my videos was an opportunity to be seen by media like *Billboard* and a lot of artists” (Rudolph).

According to Lyons, many recording artists who see class dance videos posted on a choreographers *YouTube* or *Instagram*, videos created in LA dance studios such as Millennium, will immediately want to hire these choreographers to work on making their music videos. According to Lyons, however, there is a downside to this. “They’re not thinking about if they actually can do the work. Choreographing in class is totally different than choreographing in frame for a music video or even on a live stage” (Lyons). A dance teacher has skills different from those of a choreographer. They don’t have to have the same

skill sets; they don't have the same care about their subjects; they are two different types of craftspeople with different skill sets.

Interestingly, Lyons has realized that social media often portrays dance as an easy thing to do, that anyone can make money out of if they have a formula. This is very dismaying to Lyons, since she's been acquiring her skills as a choreographer, as a director, with deep seriousness since her early childhood. Lyons goes on to say, "Many trendy teachers on social media tend to teach somewhat beginning movement, and what they're doing isn't that hard, so that's why everybody looks good doing it. That's why everyone else thinks it's so easy" (Lyons). Dance is a very popular medium and can be practiced to attain different levels of articulation, form and style. The basic barriers to entry are very low, but it takes dedicated work and a long development time to achieve the highest, most elite levels of attainment. It appears that many think dance is very easy and therefore they too can do it. They may not think twice about promoting themselves as a dancer, because no one at any of these social media entry points is checking their credentials or resume.

Lyons' interview opens the way to thinking of social media as being a lot like the medical trial of a new drug. A useful metaphor is to think of it as a medicine that wasn't adequately tested for its impacts before being released to the public. There are no significant precedents to which we can compare this moment in the dance industry. Everyone can gain access to social media and potential dance employment with no credentials necessary and no vetting process required. There are no gatekeepers. This lack of research means that the impact social media will have on professional artists down the line is unknown. Lyons believes, that the flaws will continue to present themselves, and she thinks nothing is better

than ‘the original’ (Lyons) when it comes to quality in the field. After interviewing Lyons, I concluded that she views social media as both a blessing and a curse. She feels fortunate to have had opportunities to showcase her work worldwide via the use of social media, but she doesn’t like the fact that “The resume doesn’t matter anymore. Whether you are equipped for the job or not has “gone out the door” (Lyons). The flaws and unforeseen effects of social media may not be seen until an undetermined future date, and in the meantime, the marketing experiments continue.

Lyons’ valuable information and tips on how to use social media helped me to understand why *Instagram* should not consume your life and identity is crucial to having a healthy relationship with the platform. Interviewing Lyons has made me realize that social media is a ‘game,’ and all of your moves must be made with deference to professionalism. I have understood how important it is to always remember who you are and what your values are, to always remain conscious of your goals and how you want to be perceived on social media. Lyons’ advice about always having a backup plan and not becoming dependent on a social media platform is advice I can retain and pass on to my future students, young people born into this social media phenomenon. I used these major insights from Lyons in my own newly created *Instagram* profile, and for 14 days I document my experience. I recount that in the remainder of this chapter.

Robert Laos–*Instagram* Self-Study

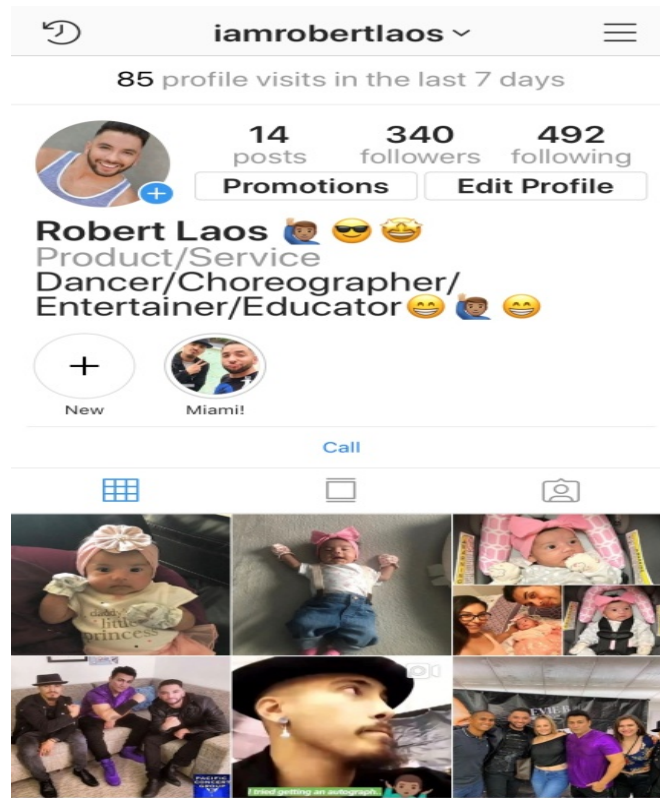


Fig. 5. Robert Laos' profile on *Instagram*, showing the number of his posts, photos, and video texts that are archived. It also indicates the number of people and accounts that have elected to follow his activity. The final number represents the number of people or accounts Laos is monitoring, and these show up on his daily news feed. Robert's profile also shows how many visits there have been to his profile in the last 7 days.

The purpose of this *Instagram* study is to analyze how someone new, born at the tail end of Gen-X, learns to navigate the technology. This 14-day study is intended to give me a guided, first-hand experience of what it is like to be an *Instagram* user. As an educator, I feel that I can provide guidance to my students about social media by experiencing and exploring these platforms myself.

I seek to find out if the potential feelings of confusion, anxiety, dependency and addiction that my research has uncovered from the use of social media will be present during my own use. I will document my own experiences throughout this process.

In order to successfully conduct my social media study, I will use the suggestions offered in the *Media Update* article, “How to Become an Influencer—A 10-step Guide for Social Media,” discussed in Chapter 1 (How to Become). These 10 steps helped me understand exactly who I would position my content for, what I’d say to my target audience, and what strategy would work best for me. Below I adapt their suggested imperatives to my social media strategy.

1. **Determine your social media niche:** Commercial dance industry
2. **Understand your social media audience:** Aspiring dancers, choreographers, performers
3. **Choose your social platform:** *Instagram*
4. **Create your social media strategy:** 14-day study that includes videos, photos, and ongoing narration of activities
5. **Develop your marketing content:** Pictures and videos
6. **Engage with your audience:** Share fresh content that I think will be engaging to my target audience.
7. **Be consistent on social media:** Post 2 to 3 videos or pictures per day.
8. **Promote your marketing content:** Use hashtags and follow more people in the industry.

9. **Collaborate with Influencers:** Mention Influencers and tag people apart from the events I'm posting about.
10. **Check out your social media analytics:** Check in every 24 hours to determine how my posts are doing and how many followers I'm accumulating.

I downloaded and signed up for the *Instagram* app through my iPhone. Needing to find the perfect name and picture for my profile, I decided to choose my professional headshot as my profile picture and use the name *iamrobertlaos* as my profile name, which made this an easy step to complete. The mapping of this project was scheduled around my first time traveling, rehearsing and performing with the singing group Linear. This opportunity was taking me away from my usual setting between April 15th and 20th of 2019 and immersing me into a whole new environment. This new space away from California provided me with a significant opportunity that I felt was important enough to announce, which launched me into my first post. This is where Lyons' expertise came into play. I asked for her recommendation of a good and effective way to introduce myself on *Instagram*. She replied, "Introduce yourself and what you're doing. Just be yourself" (Lyons). I decided to reference the book "The Infographic Guide for Entrepreneurs" by Carissa Lytle and Jara Kern. In the section titled "Being Social: Which Channels Should I Use?" I found that the average American spends 2 hours a day on social media. "The numbers don't lie; social media is one of your best options for building your business" (Lytle and Kern 70). This section also provided a chart that showed me where my time and effort would be best spent on social media, depending my goals.



Fig. 6. Lytle and Kern’s chart provides an overview of how to use social media platforms effectively, depending on goals.

After assessing this information, I decided to create a video post on using the iMovie application on my smart phone. This allowed a way for me to introduce myself and present the unique opportunity that was coming my way. The process required to make a short 1-minute video took a colossal 2-plus hours, and still I found that it wasn’t quite what I wanted it to be. *Instagram* only allows you to post 1-minute videos, which proved problematic, because I wanted to explain my opportunity in full. So many details had to be left out. I announced that I would fly to Miami for an entire week of rehearsals leading up to our performance on April 19th. I was surrounded by artists I’d never met before and performed for crowds of thousands of people. I concluded this would be an interesting and dynamic start to my *Instagram* journey. I echoed a feeling similar to Lyons,’ separating personal life from professional life.

Day	Form of Media	Time Required to Create & Post	Outcome	Followers
1	Picture	10 minutes	Received 142 likes Received 30 comments	20
2	Video	2 hours	Received 143 likes Received 58 comments 309 views	55
3	Picture	20 minutes	Received 79 likes Received 2 comments	78
4	Video	1 hour	Received 73 likes Received 10 comments 213 views	92
5	Picture	1 hour	Received 70 likes Received 1 comment	110
6	Picture	20 minutes	Received 50 likes Received 50 comments	134
7	Video	2 hours	Received 130 likes Received 17 comments 293 views	156
8	Video	1 hour	Received 78 likes Received 7 comments 200 views	168
9	Picture	20 minutes	Received 81 likes	176
10	Video	1 hours	Received 54 likes Received 2 comments 197 views	182
11	Picture	20 minutes	82 likes	183
12	Picture	1 hour 30 minutes	Received 108 likes Received 22 comments	179
13	Picture	20 minutes	Received 81 likes Received 11 comments	181
14	Picture	15 minutes	Received 93 likes Received 11 comments	192
Total	9 Pictures and 5 Videos	11 hours and 35 minutes	Received 1,264 likes Received 221 comments And 1,212 views	192 Followers after 14 days.

Table 2

The table above shows the forms of my posting along with the outcomes in terms of likes and increase in following. The time I spend doing this amount to almost 12 hours and this does not include the decisions I made in taking and staging the pictures and videos I posted or the time responding to the follower's comments and activity. There was also time

spent simply reviewing other people's entries and so the real time was likely closer to 30 hours over this 14-day period.

During this time, I documented which posting methods worked best for me, which posts got the most likes and how many followers I accumulated during a 2-week period. I also documented my feelings and emotions as they arose: before, during, and after this study. As soon as I started out on my 14-day *Instagram* journey, I felt very nervous and was filled with anxiety. These feelings and thoughts were coming from realizing how much people depend and rely on *Instagram* to raise their professional profiles. Lyons' advice about being myself proved to be a challenge. I found myself overthinking every idea and cancelling posts, only to start over again. Once I decided to post, it took me about an hour to finally be comfortable enough to submit it. This entire experience, in relation to the amount of time required, was very shocking to me. The amount of time and effort it took me to post a simple picture, a 1-minute video, or even to choose the 'right' filter proved difficult; there were simply too many options. I knew I would have some trouble with posting, but I didn't think I would need to go through as much stress as I did.

Day after day, I was continuing to doubt myself on whether the pictures I posted were good choices, even after I published them. I finally understood why users get so invested in their postings. I started to grasp that if I really wanted to be successful with the use of social media, I would have to invest a significant amount of my time throughout the day to stay constantly engaged. I note that this is time that could otherwise be spent taking classes, having a massage or just sleeping, since dancers need to be well-rested while touring. The time spent on this platform is in addition to things people have to do in their

professional careers, and to find that time sacrifices and new investments seem inevitable. It became clear that spending large volumes of time on *Instagram* is easy, and I found that the more time I spent, the more doubts, stress and overthinking came into play; I found myself needing to take breaks constantly. Ironically, the more breaks I took, the fewer likes and comments I got.

To gain a following, the app encouraged me to click on the ‘Discover People’ button that allowed me to see who I knew on *Instagram* and then to follow them.

This process was also very time-consuming and filled with advertising distractions, because I knew a lot of people on the app and clicking and viewing each profile took time, although I was learning as I went along. The process of selecting who to follow initially required a couple hours of my time.

The fact that my *Facebook* account was linked to my *Instagram* account was surprising to me, but it did allow me to find people I knew more easily, without having to search for people one by one. Linking both accounts also notified my *Facebook* friends that I had joined *Instagram*, which helped me gain followers right away. At the end of my first day on *Instagram*, I was following 108 people and already had 76 followers. Day by day, I found myself trying to think ahead about what I could possibly post throughout the day. There were even times when I missed an opportunity to post something because I didn’t take a picture or video and I found myself feeling disappointed, which was odd for me as well. Daily, the *Instagram* app would recommend people that I might want to follow, and I would continue to follow more people, which in return increased my followers. I noticed that the more people you follow, the more people see your content. As I approached Day 3 and 4 of my *Instagram* study, I had

already accumulated 113 followers and was following 215 people. Part of accumulating followers had to do with the fact that followers of the band Linear ³were now starting to follow me. This was something that both Lyons and Daz said happens when dancers or performers tour or perform with artists who have a following; “The fans will follow the artist and in return will then follow you” (Daz). According to Lyons, many Influencers have accumulated their followings because of this.

All of my feedback and comments on my postings on *Facebook* were positive, and many of the individuals I knew were happy to finally see me on *Instagram*, which encouraged me to become more engaged. Once I hit Days 4 and 5, I realized that my confidence with being on *Instagram* had changed. I started to not think so much about what I was posting when it came to pictures and videos. I chose to be silly, regardless of what I looked like. Once I relaxed, I enjoyed being on the app, and I cared less and less what people would think about me. This in turn also made me feel as if what I was posting was more authentically representative of who I was. Posting videos was becoming more fun, and I even got more views and likes on videos than I did pictures, which informed my approach toward future postings. Posting around 6 p.m. when people were off work, or on Sunday nights when many people are relaxing at home, was another bit of advice I used from Lyons, and I noticed a larger amount of activity on *Instagram* when doing so. When I didn’t follow the advice about posting 2 to 3 times daily from the chart by Kern and Lytle (Lytle and Kern 70), I noticed a decrease in followers from not being engaged. This might have been avoided

³ <https://tinyurl.com/y22ogr8q>

had I used the application feature allowing postings to be scheduled. I can see the benefits of this feature, especially for those who utilize *Instagram* as part of their business.

Pursuing this trial has given me a new perspective on *Instagram*. I now see how users can become obsessed with posting constantly throughout the day. There is a form of addiction that happens when it comes to acquiring likes and followers. I found myself wondering how I could do more with each and every post. What surprised me the most about *Instagram* was the fact that after a few days, I ended up no longer feeling stressed or pressured about my posts. Perhaps this was because *Instagram* was only a means of entertainment, not something I had to depend on to provide income or job opportunities. That I didn't rely on the app as a source of income or allow it to define who I am as a dancer was why I think I enjoyed it so much. Needing to continually post on the app throughout the day to maintain a business or a source of income and keep my followers happy and myself engaged would, I estimate, create a huge amount of stress for me. Lyons' advice about not letting *Instagram* consume you is the best piece of advice, from my experience. And as an educator, I will be sure to pass that same advice on to my students. Also, authenticity in everything you post about yourself provides another layer of enjoyment when using the app.

I realized that 2 weeks is too brief a period of time to conclude precisely how to use *Instagram* fully, but what I have learned is that putting up an account was not as treacherous as I first thought. I've gone through the anxiety of entering a world I didn't understand, and I broke through that barrier. Composing content, organizing content and even organizing my day around generating content is something I have learned how to do. Moreover, I

would think about how I could keep content rolling out and constantly remain engaged.

Utilizing the entire set of tools offered on *Instagram* proved impossible, but I was able to use some, including ‘*Instagram* Stories’ and ‘Boomerang.’ Composing content takes time, regardless of whether a post was big or small.

Users have to organize their days around their postings and plan their content in advance so as to have a stock of content that allows them to keep rolling out posts throughout the day. Inactivity for even a day caused me to lose followers, so I found that being constantly engaged is crucial. I also learned that *Facebook* and *Instagram* are connected, which was a benefit for me in gaining followers, since I was already a *Facebook* user.

CONCLUSION

My research was conducted to learn how social media has affected the commercial dance world. Within this study, I discovered the ways social media impact dancers' careers. Interviewing professional choreographers, professional dancers and directors in the commercial dance industry were the tools I used to gather my research. As part of the research it was necessary to assemble a social media lexicon to increase my literacy in talking about the new tools used throughout the commercial industry. From examining the current careers of Sienna Lyons, BJ Daz, Katisha Adams and Meisha Lee, I was able to get an inside look at how they use and reflect upon the impact of social media. They represent different aspects of the industry: dancers, choreographers and teachers.

I discovered that social media have created new ways of commodifying people as brands to extend the reach of their products. The experiential evidence shows that it does not matter if dancers or actors have professional training, as long as they have a following. It is this that is quantifiable to companies as they convert these followings into potential customers pre-groomed by the Influencer. It is clear that companies have found an easier way to get their marketing done by everyday people: many more people can view their products, buy tickets, and increase their ratings if they are attached to Influencers or social media stars whom they follow. Production and advertising companies are benefitting aplenty from this tactic, but at the same time, by contracting non-professionals to do highly skilled work they impede excellence in production. They have effectively lowered the barrier to entry. And as a result of this sea change, directors, dancers and choreographers are finding themselves working even harder when part of these projects, because they have to teach this

onslaught of non-professionals the protocols of being in a professional environment. Additionally, professional actors, dancers, and choreographers have experienced job scarcity and even loss (as described by Sienna Lyons) because projects are being assigned to these non-professionals, with allegedly huge social media followings. Professionals who have been in the industry for years now have to adapt to what production companies are looking for, and many of them are having a hard time, as Chapter 3 makes clear.

One of my goals now is to make sure that detailed information concerning the tactics and strategies that production companies are now implementing is made known. I aim to prepare my students for what is to come as they graduate and enter the professional space. Helping students to feel prepared when they step out into the real world is what I will strive to achieve.

As an educator, my goal now, due to this research into the commercial dance industry, is to provide up-to-date knowledge valuable to students interested in careers in this territory. Interviewing professionals within this industry has provided me with validating insights as to precisely how social media and the commercial dance industry continuously change each other's worlds.

Social media is a huge part of everyday life for many. And through my research, I've discovered how vital and important it is to the life of dancer and other artists in the industry. Regardless of whether or not we may approve of social media and its influence, I found that artists will be critiqued for what they put out on social media, and others will utilize these platforms to inform their first ideas about who they are. And this initial impression is very important. Those who don't have a profile are not exempt from these judgments; not having

a profile is frowned upon, as noted in by BJ Daz in Chapter 3, “What kind of dancer are you if your social media is set to private as a commercial dancer?”(Daz). Production companies and professionals will question what kind of dancer a person really is and may doubt their commitment to securing paid work. It is abundantly clear that social media is now a new form of resume, and artists must treat it as such. According to Daz’s, that they don’t have to include videos of themselves dancing if it’s not something they are comfortable with; they can choose instead to showcase their unique qualities and highlight their style and who they are as individuals. Dancers who are versatile have more job opportunities, and from the research it is evident that being versatile, combining the old-school ways of getting a job with the new, will only create more opportunities in the future, as noted by Daz.

Providing my students with information on how to post effectively with class and what is considered to be in good taste is key. Strategies could be developed in a class setting that would allow their social media usage to represent who they are to be as future professionals. Providing awareness through these examples of just how much social media can impact a career is important information to pass on.

In addition, I can envisage demystifying social media for professionals who have enjoyed long-standing careers. Now that I have launched myself into this social media space, I am a part of what is current. This research has allowed me to gather a significant amount of useful information that can be reshaped to provide guidance to my students, as it has done for me personally and professionally. I can envisage utilizing this information in a section of senior seminars or dance and technology courses. Using this information to advise other academics who are equally mystified is also a role I feel confident I can fulfill.

To continue being a resource, it is necessary for me to continue to use and research this ever-changing world of social media. Keeping up to date with new terminology, being an early-adopter, and remaining in constant communication with individuals like my interviewees are important to continue on with this journey. I must continue to immerse myself in the commercial dance industry, too, and set an example of what a healthy relationship with social media looks like. Practicing what I preach is important, I believe, and will only impart more validity and truth to the knowledge I pass on.

Being 37-year-old, having had established a career with Disney, up until today I have been able to gain employment based on the strength of my network and professional experience. While personally I don't feel it's necessary to use Instagram to maintain my career, will it help create new opportunities? Based on what others have demonstrated, quite possibly. Will I continue to use it? Yes, since I'm committed to better understand social media in relation to the industry. Participation using the most current social media platform allow me to be up-to-date as I go on to teach students and mentor young professionals. Social media is here to stay, new platforms will arise in the future, and as a result of this research I will be confident being an early adopter.

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