Jazz Dance Terminology

General Vocabulary

- Choreographer: A person who composes a dance
- Choreography: A dance composition
- Downbeat: An accented beat which begins a musical measure
- Downstage: Toward the front of the stage or room
- Floor pattern: A path followed during a movement combination
- Lyrical: Smooth, sustained movement
- Stage left: The left side of the stage or room as one faces the audience or front
- Stage right: The right side of the stage or room as one faces the audience or front
- Upstage: Toward the back of the stage or room
- Upbeat: the unaccented mid-point between beats
- Syncopation: a temporary displacement of the regular metrical accent in music caused typically by stressing the weak beat

Positions

- Brush: A movement in which one leg moves away from the standing leg and returns. The foot skims the floor as one moves it out or in.
- Contraction: Position or movement in which the center of the torso retreats
- Flexed: Feet and toes are retracted back and heels are pressed forward
- Forced arch: on ball of the foot with heel off the floor and knee bent
- Lunge: Position in either 2nd or 4th where only one knee is bent and the other straight
- Parallel: Stance where toes face forward
- Retiré or passé: Position in which the toe of one leg touches the knee of the standing leg
Steps

- **Ball Change**: Syncopated weight shift onto the ball of the rear foot and back to the flat front foot.
- **Fan kick**: A kick in which the working leg makes a sweeping arc in front of the body.
- **Hitch kick**: A scissor-like movement where one leg is in the air while the other leg kicks up to pass it.
- **Isolations**: Movement of only one part of the body.
- **Jazz walk**: Many varieties but generally a turned out low walk using shoulder opposition.
- **Jazz pas de bourree**: A back-side-front three step move in the floor pattern of an isosceles triangle.
- **Jazz square**: A crossed front-back-back-front four step move in the floor pattern of a square.

Turns

- **Chaine**: Consecutive half turns traveling and rotating in a single direction.
- **Inside turn**: Forwards turn; a turn toward the standing leg.
- **Outside turn**: Backwards turn; a turn away from the standing leg.
- **Pencil turn**: Pirouette with both legs straight.
- **Pique turn**: Inside turn which begins with a step onto half-toe with an already straight leg.
- **Pirouette**: Turn on one leg that begins in plie and goes to releve from a plie.
- **Pivot turn**: Half-Turn on two legs with weight transfer from one leg to the other; Feet stay stationary but swivel.
- **Spotting**: Focusing on one spot while turning to prevent dizziness.

Jumps

- **Calypso**: Chaine into a leap with the back leg in attitude, land on the front leg.
- **Chassé**: Step one foot, together in the air, land on the other foot; A gallop or slide.
- **Hop**: Taking off from one foot and landing on the same one.
- Jump: Taking off of two feet and landing on two feet
- Leap: A jump from one foot to the other foot usually with an opening of the legs in the air
- Skip: Alternating hops from one to the other or with steps in between