



UTAH DANCE FILM

• F E S T I V A L •

Location Scouting for Dance Films



Presented by Katie Bruce
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Location Scouting for Dance Films

A dance film is a form of visual storytelling that uses motion and movement as a central theme.

What are you adding to a dance film when you choose a location and design the movement and the production with a relationship to the architecture of that distinct place?

You add cohesion, you build a collaborative relationship with your filmmaker, you gift your dancers a realistic filming experience.

How can dance filmmakers speak the visual language of film more clearly by capitalizing on their locations?

Invite your filmmakers into the process by designing shots based on rehearsal and research.

Architecture is one of the arts of longest duration, while the realization of a dance piece disappears as the performance of it unfolds.

A video of a dance lives longer than the dance itself - build yourself a monument in our impermanent field.



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Location scouting for dance films requires consideration for two branches of production:

Scouting Concepts and Rehearsal Process

Basic Necessities for Equipment and Crew



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Scouting Concepts which Move a Project Forward

Site-reactive, rather than site specific, choreography, lighting and camera motion.
Frame discussions as though the location is a partner.

Rehearsal Processes that Accomplish Goals

Plan to rehearse and scout with your Director of Photography.
Have your performers practice modifications in formation, dynamics, spatial orientation and speed so that you can be prepared for options on set.
During rehearsals with filmmakers, create solutions rather than decisions.
Experiment with your light - discover different textures, intensities and colors.
Test costumes on camera.

Utilize footage of rehearsals to create your edit plan.
Continuity and coverage matter, even if the dance is not linear.

Think in pictures, speak using visual words.



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Basic Necessities - Equipment

Power, lights, cameras, lenses, monitors, audio equipment, hard drives and speakers.

Space for costumes, makeup, water, restrooms and craft services.

Basic Necessities - Crew

Camera operator(s) and assistant(s), gaffer, grips, audio, DIT.

Space to build out cameras, lights, sync audio, troubleshoot for each space used.

A reasonable shooting schedule, and a plan in place to modify the schedule.

Budget to rent equipment, even if it is minimal.



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Scouting Details Which Will Matter to your Film

The meaning of a movement can change just by seeing it through a lens. Likewise, the shape of objects framing the body can alter, or limit, the perception of the movement.



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Scouting Details Which Will Matter to your Film

Your dance film will have better flow and a quick editing process if you plan transitions which make use of your specific location.



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Light as Architecture

Cameras and equipment, like bodies, have limitations and needs.

If you choose an exterior location, find a place where you can manipulate and supplement natural light.

If you choose an interior location, be certain that you have enough room, power and temperature control for big, warm lights.

Light has physiological effects on people, including crew, dancers and viewers.

Direct light creates stimulation, directly affecting the senses straight on.

Indirect light creates calm, suspense or curiosity engaging senses through emotion.

Angles create shape to build columns or pathways

Texture uses patterns to build environments

Timing of motion adds visual rhythm



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Resources for Dance Filmmakers

[Utah Film Commission](#)

[Allen's Camera in Provo and Orem](#)

[The Utah Dance Film Festival!](#)

[Peer Space](#)

[Atlas Obscura](#)

[Sun Scout](#)

[The Photographer's Ephemeris](#)

