

Why the Tights?

Both male and female dancers wear tights causing a variety of responses (especially for the men in tights) ranging from it being okay and esthetically pleasing to snickers and giggles. So let's find out why the tights. What is fascinating about this is that it is that nobody gives a second thought about athletes who wear tight fitting clothes. Cyclists, wrestlers, swimmers, scuba divers and gymnasts all wear clothing which reveals the size and shape of the body.

For some the design is a matter of speed. Look how the competitive swimming gear has changed over the years each year becoming tighter and in some cases skimpier and designed to shave off fractions of seconds in an effort to win medals. The same is true for cyclists. Even skiers while not yet in unitards, are now wearing one or two piece tighter fitting gear.

Gymnasts, like dancers, have a series of needs to be met. For example, muscles work better when they are kept warm and tights help keep the heat in. Furthermore, their chosen sport or art is designed for esthetic appreciation; line and design are of great importance. In dance we need to see intricate foot and leg movement. Bulkier clothing would not only hide the movement but also get in the way of its execution.

Believe it or not, tights actually originated from men's clothing. If we go back far enough in time (middle ages) we would find that most men wore tunics (long shirts or short close-fitting coats) and leggings (tight fitting) which were just legs—no seat. The top ends came up to the waist where they were secured by a belt. The lower torso was then covered with trunks or “slops.” Since there was less bulky material to deal with it was easier to put on and remove armor.

So you see, men in tights are neither new nor bizarre. We have gone through several periods in our history when it was perfectly acceptable for men to wear tight clothing on the street and in everyday life.