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Original cast of grace under fire

After a long hiatus that lasted nearly two years, Dance Moms finally returns to Lifetime tonight at 9/8C for an entire new era of dance and drama. After Abby Lee Miller's tenure in federal prison, and her battle with spinal cancer, many questioned whether the show would ever return. Miller was determined to prove everyone wrong and now the eighth season is underway. But, so much has changed since the series first premiered in 2011. The biggest change is that, with the exception of Miller, none of the original cast members return for the new season. Let's take a look at where they are today. The cast of Dance Moms | Photo by Jason Merritt/Getty Images Maddie Ziegler Arguably the show's most successful alum, 16-year-old Ziegler has been one of the series' standout artists since the first episode. As Miller's favorite, it's been a rare week that he hasn't been able to perform solo. Ziegler stuck around for six seasons and managed to catch the eye of the musical artist, Sia. These days, Ziegler remains just as busy as she was for Moms Dance and still has a strong connection to Sia. More recently, he appeared in a music video for the song No New Friends by the LSD group, of which Sia is a member. In addition, he has the lead in the upcoming film Music (directed by Sia), where he plays the role of an autistic teenager. Chloe Lukassak Although Lukasak was undoubtedly one of the most talented dancers in the series, he often got the short end of the stick. Relentless comparisons with Mandy, coupled with Miller's mistreatment due to the ongoing drama with her mother, caused Lucas to abruptly leave the show in its fourth season. However, he made a stunning return in season seven of the show following Miller's departure. These days, the 18-year-old has her own book club and plans to harness her dance and acting skills in the upcoming film Next Level. Nia Frazier Frazier holds the

title for longest cast member for Dance Moms and was present for all seven seasons of the show. Often overlooked, and constantly criticized for her technique, she was an incredibly hard worker and an excellent performer. With acting natural talent, she brought a lot of energy and charisma to her solos, even when they were few and far between. Today, the 17-year-old puts these skills to good use as an actress for The Bold and the Beautiful. Mackenzie Ziegler The newest member of the original ALDC Junior Elite Competition Team, Ziegler stole our hearts with her adorable demeanor and fitness skills. We saw her grow before our eyes and it turned out to be complete singer and hip-hop dancer before coming out of the show with her sister in season six. These days, the 15-year-old mainly uses her vocal skills, although she also has her own makeup line. She released her second album late last year and is going on tour this summer with the band Pretty Much. Brooke Hyland Hyland, who was famed for her amazing acrobatic skills, was the show's oldest dancer at the time of the original recording. She was known to be a miller favorite when she was younger, but struggled to stay invested in dance as she entered her teenage years. She abruptly left the show midway through season four after a physical altercation between Miller and her mother. Today, the 21-year-old has seemingly put performance behind her and is currently travelling to Europe to celebrate his graduation from college in just three years. Paige Hyland One of the best glasses in the team, Hyland also left the series in season four. Although she was talented, she was often in the shadows of other dancers and often desecrated by Miller. Today the 18-year-old is preparing to head off to college at West Virginia University. Kendall Vertes Although Vertes did not join the cast until the second season, it is often believed to be an original member. Staying around until season seven, the versatile dancer often argued with outrageous props in her solo. Today the 16-year-old pursues a career in singing and acting. Rapunzel's recent film, A Princess Frozen In Time, was released on Amazon last month. Kalani Hilliker Hilliker joined the cast of the show in season four, and remains one of the show's most successful dancers. He specializes in contemporary and lyrical, and one of Miller's favorites, it was a rare day when he didn't get the first prize at home. Since leaving the show at the end of season seven, the 18-year-old has done a fair amount of modeling. Most recently they appear on billboards for the retail company, Prom Girl. It's been a year since the season finale that should never have happened, but Game of Thrones fans are still salty about the way the epic original HBO series ended. Fortunately, the network has another chance to do the right thing by the historical fictional universe of George R.R. Martin with a developing GoT prequel that could - and absolutely should - see Westeros is much more diverse. Late last year, HBO announced that a new GoT series focused on the ancestral line of Daenerys Targaryen (Emilia Clarke) had gotten into production, and the project has officially entered the casting phase. Based on Martin's Fire & Blood, House of the Dragon is set to delve deeper into the knowledge of Westeros' scariest family, exploring the laconic domestic politics that led to a civil war that would permanently separate the continent for centuries to come. there will be drama, and there will be dragons - but will there be people of color? Let's face it: for a constructed land mass, westeros were really white. Sure, there were a few main characters who were also people of color sprinkled throughout, but GoT was largely lacking in detailed detail non-white peoples. When black and brown people were part of history, they were often props, part of someone else's story arc. They worked tirelessly as enslaved people or served in their armies, nothing more. The few exceptions could be Missandei (Nathalie Emmanuel) and Grey Worm (Jacob Anderson). Although no one on the show really got a happy ending - apart from Sansa Stark (Sophie Turner), the one true Queen in the North - I'm far enough from GoT to point out that these two definitely got the short end of the stick. The tragic decapitation of Missandei by Cersei (Lena Headey) was the catalyst for Daenerys' mental collapse, and Grey Worm lost his only love, but had to stay by his queen's side in her quest for the liberation of world domination. But the plot of the original HBO didn't bother to take the time to explore the subtle experiences of these characters; Instead, they served as shallow leaves for the development of their khaleesi. House of the Dragon presents a unique opportunity for HBO, not only to wipe our minds clean of the devastation that was the finale of the GoT series, but also to lean on the untold stories of Westeros' overlooked population. While the show may be about the Targaryens, pre-war Westeros is described to have enjoyed a certain amount of cultural unity and diversity in all seven kingdoms. So there is literally no reason for the prequel to keep ignoring people of color in this universe. There's no official word on which particular characters from Martin's Fire & Blood will make an appearance in House of the Dragon, but I keep my fingers crossed that we'll get a cast that's both different and interesting. And after the way Gott finished, HBO owes us at least that. The creators of Memoirs of a Geisha are expected to be praised for creating the first big-budget Hollywood film with Asian actors in every leading role. Instead, they find themselves defending casting decisions that have caused historical tensions between Japan and China. The English-language film is set in Japan and adapted from the American novel. It stars Chinese actresses Ziyi Zhang and Gong Li, and Chinese-Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh. They join several Japanese performers, including Ken Watanabe.For months, the internet has been filled with vitriol over cultural sensitivity, and Zhang has been denounced in China for its starring role. The arguments come down to this: A film about Japanese culture should have a Japanese actress at the forefront. The filmmakers, however, believed that it would be short-sighted and biased. Producers Douglas Wick (Gladiator) and Lucy Fisher, and director Rob Marshall (Chicago), say the casting was an exhaustive, meticulous process that examined acting ability, star power and physical characteristics. Some Japanese actors didn't even want to audition because they couldn't speak English and it was he's afraid to try to take it on, Fisher said. Marshall said that when Zhang auditioned, she immediately found that she deserved to be the star: Your hope as a director is that someone comes in and claims the role, says This is mine. The conversation is somewhat awkward considering that actors have played characters of different nationalities throughout the history of cinema. When you saw Zorba the Greek and you saw Anthony Quinn play Zorba, was it weird for you because he was Irish and Mexican? Marshall said. Or when you saw Dr. Zhivago and saw Omar Sharif, who is Egyptian, playing Russian, was that what threw you away? Gong said she chooses roles based on substance, not race As actors, we seek roles that challenge and inspire us, she said in a statement to The Associated Press. Think of all the amazing performances that will be lost - Meryl Streep as a Polish woman in Sophie's Choice; Russell Crowe as an American in The Insider; Ralph Fiennes as German in Schindler's List; Vivien Leigh as an American in 'Gone With The Wind'; Sir Anthony Hopkins as U.S. President of Nixon, Gong said. But the symbolism in Geisha, set for limited release on Friday, is strong for many Chinese.During Japan's 1937-38 occupation of Nanjing, Japanese troops killed at least 150,000 Chinese citizens and raped tens of thousands of women. Today, there is tension over Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's repeated visits to a shrine honoring some convicted war criminals, as well as the territorial dispute over the Diaoyutai or Senkaku islands. In April, Chinese protesters vandalized shops and smashed windows at Japanese diplomatic offices while protesting Japanese textbooks claiming to whitewash the country's war atrocities. Just the sight of kimono-clad Chinese actors could make flare tempers: Chinese actor-singer Zhao Wei is widely reported to have been smeared with human feces after wearing a shirt bearing the Japanese military flag. (Zhang) went out of her way to portray an outlet for Japanese desires. This is a loss of face for the Chinese, said one posting on the Chinese web portal Netease.com. The Chinese were comfort women during World War II, and continue to serve Japanese in modern times. Such a story has created an Asian climate so sensitive, South Korean actress Kim Yun-jin, best known to Western audiences for her role in TV Lost, reportedly turned down a role in Geisha for nationalist reasons. But American filmmakers had other concerns, such as the power of the stars and the Ticket. Known names Zhang, Yeoh and Gong are somewhat familiar to the American public. Zhang and Yeoh co-star in the box-office hit Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, and Zhang has since become the international face of Chinese Chinese with roles in Hero, House of Flying Stilettos and 2046. Yeoh became the first Asian Bond girl in Tomorrow Never Dies. And Gong won a devoted cult following thanks to her work in Raise the Red Lantern and Goodbye My Concube. Obviously, when you make a bigger-budget movie, the better known the faces are, the happier the financiers are, Fisher said. But does casting for the sake of charisma mean authenticity is sacrificed? Marshall is quick to point out that while he did extensive research on geisha culture, realism was not his main concern I never intended to make this film as a documentary-style version of the novel, Marshall said. It's really a myth. Some people who saw the film at its Tokyo premiere thought Marshall was moving too far away from reality. I felt like I was watching a movie set in China, and not in Japan, office worker Yumiko Kamiyama told the AP. I'm a big fan of Zhang Ziyi, so I wanted to see this. But I won't recommend it to my friends. Still, the wait for the film remains high in Japan, and has been cleared by Chinese censors. (The China Film Bureau did not respond to AP questions.) Most of the Japanese audience watching the premiere of this film had positive reactions, Jay Sakomoto, president of Shochiku Co., Japan's largest film distributor in Japan, said in a statement. Ziyi Zhang's portrayal of Sayuri was impeccable, and many people thought she looked more Japanese than a real Japanese woman.

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